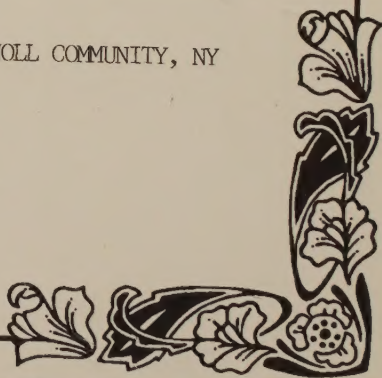


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THE EARLY PERSECUTIONS OF THE CHRISTIANS

STUDIES IN HISTORY, ECONOMICS AND PUBLIC LAW

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THE EARLY PERSECUTIONS OF THE CHRISTIANS

BY

LEON HARDY CANFIELD, Ph.D.,

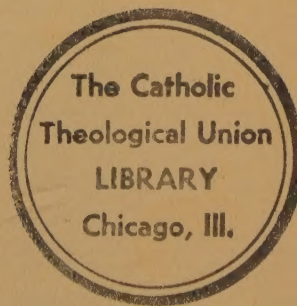
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PREFACE

THE following pages are an outgrowth of a seminar on "Paganism and Christianity," given by Professor James T. Shotwell in the year 1909-1910. At that time a series of monographs was planned, the object of which was, as Dr. Humphrey expresses it, to treat of the conflict of religions fully and impartially in the light of all available documentary evidence.¹ But there was also a further object, namely, to collect all the scattered source material and present it in such a way that the reader might have constantly before him the documents upon which the opinions expressed in the text were based. Accordingly, this work has been so arranged that each chapter in the first part corresponds to a chapter in the second part in which is given all the source material bearing upon that period. Where the importance of the document warrants, the text is given both in the original and in translation.

The author wishes to express his deep sense of obligation to the Graduate Faculty in History at Columbia University, and in particular to Professor James T. Shotwell. To Professor Shotwell, under whose directions this study has been prepared, the writer owes a great debt. The author is also deeply indebted to Professor William Walker Rockwell of Union Theological Seminary, who has not only made many invaluable sugges-

¹ E. F. Humphrey, *Politics and Religion in the Days of Augustine* (New York, 1912).

tions, but who, as Librarian at the Seminary, has offered every possible assistance. The writer is also most appreciative of the work of Munroe Smith, Professor of Roman Law, who has given many keen suggestions on the Roman Law, and upon the translation of legal sources. For his assistance on several difficult points of Latin translation, the writer is indebted to Dr. Mario E. Cosenza, of the College of the City of New York. He also wishes to acknowledge the many hours of assistance on the part of Mrs. Canfield.

L. H. C.,
College of the City of New York, April, 1913.

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PART I
THE EARLY PERSECUTIONS



CHAPTER I

LEGAL BASIS OF THE PERSECUTIONS

RELIGION is a social phenomenon. This fact is being daily impressed upon us by anthropologists and sociologists. It is, in both cult and belief, the expression of those things treasured most by the society which professes or practices it. These are "sacred" things, and any attack upon them, even in the name of reform, has consistently met with repression. From the primitive taboo, with its automatic power of avenging sacrilege by supernatural terrors, to priestly and then legal codes inflicting their own penalties, the mysteries of religion have been universally safeguarded from profanation. Religion, therefore, has always been the special center of intolerance and persecution, because its content is more highly valued by society than that of other departments of social life, such as politics or philosophy. Persecution, viewed from the standpoint of the dominant group of society, is the preservation of ancient belief and cult from the attack of sacrilege; it is part of the august process of the maintenance of the moral order. Only the victim and his sympathizers, who suffer from what to them is injustice, speak of persecution. So, from the origin of society to the present, intolerance has been an intrinsic part of the process of history.

This study is concerned with but a relatively small chapter in the history of such a universal subject, but it is a chapter upon which has been concentrated more attention than any other in the whole field. The persecution of Christians by pagan mobs and by the Roman authorities has attracted a degree of attention second only to the nar-

rative of the New Testament itself. It has been exaggerated by historians from the credulous Orosius at the opening of the fifth century to the sceptical Renan in the nineteenth. It has been emphasized and worked over in every history of the church, and has been an exhaustless theme of art and literature. The very paucity of the earlier sources has invited controversy and accordingly swelled the volume of writings upon the subject. Conjecture and surmise as to the motives of persecutions, the attitude of the emperors, the extent and intensity of successive persecutions, have furnished plentiful material for many a so-called history, while as much genuine historical research has been produced to sweep away speculations and present the facts as they come to us in the sources. But since the data are so few, they still invite controversy in the days of scientific history as they drew conjecture in the pre-scientific.

The persecution of the Christians was not begun on religious grounds, but for reasons purely social and political. Christianity by no means presented a new problem in the Roman state. Long before this sect was heard of, the state had developed a well-defined policy for dealing with foreign religions. In general this policy was syncretistic, that is to say, as the Romans conquered new communities their gods were gradually adopted into the Roman state worship, either by being identified with some of the *dii indigetes* and admitted within the *pomerium*, or by being incorporated into the national worship as *dii novensiles*.¹ But with the rapid expansion of Rome and with the constant influx of

¹ *Vide*, J. Marquardt, *Römische Staatsverwaltung*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1885), vol. iii; French translation by Brissaud, *Le Culte chez les Romains*, (Paris, 1889); G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, (München, 1912) 2nd. ed.; W. Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People* (London, 1911). For a brief discussion see E. Hardy, *Christianity and the Roman Government* (London, 1894), 2nd. ed., in *Studies in Roman History* (London, 1906), p. 4.

foreigners into the capital city, it was but natural that many strange cults should creep into Rome which were not recognized by the government and were hence beyond the jurisdiction of the pontifices who supervised the national cult. Inasmuch as the foreigner residing at Rome was excluded from the exercise of the Roman religion, which was purely national in character,¹ it was only natural that he should be unmolested in the exercise, within certain limits, of his own.² However, under the republic at least the status of a Roman citizen was not the same in this respect as that of the foreigner. Cicero, for example, gives the substance of an old law denying to citizens the right to honor new and strange divinities which had not been officially recognized.³ But it is very likely that long before the period in which we are interested religious toleration was extended to non-citizen and citizen alike.⁴

The exceptions to this policy of toleration occur only when the cults were reputed to be immoral or were a danger to the good order and security of the state. For the most part the cults which were suppressed for such reasons were of oriental origin and of an ecstatic nature. The best example of such suppression is that of the Bacchic cult in 188 B. C.,⁵ of which Livy has given a detailed account.⁶

¹ Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., p. 3; C. Callewaert, "Les persécutions contre les Chrétiens dans la politique religieuse de l'Etat romain," in *Revue des questions historiques*, vol. lxxxii, 1907, p. 8.

² *Rev. des ques. hist.*, *loc. cit.*, p. 8; Th. Mommsen, *Römisches Strafrecht* (Leipzig, 1899), pp. 568 *et seq.*; *Vide*, Tertullian, *Apology*, ch. 24; *Ad Nationes*, ii, ch. 8.

³ *De Legibus*, ii, 8, 19; 10, 25.

⁴ Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., p. 7; *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1907, vol. 82, *loc. cit.*, pp. 9 *et seq.*; See however, Mommsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 570 *et seq.*

⁵ *Vide* Wagener, "Observations complémentaires sur la lecture de M. Giron relative à la liberté de conscience à Rome," in *Bulletin de l'Académie royale de Bruxelles*, 1893, vol. xxvi, p. 315; Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd. ed., p. 8.

⁶ Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita libri*, xxxix, 8-20.

According to Livy the grand maxim of this religion was to think that nothing was unlawful.¹ The Bacchic associations were, so he says, hotbeds of indescribable vice and the source of a variety of civil crimes such as murder, forgery, and conspiracy.² A thorough investigation was carried on by the consul Postumius, who laid the whole matter before the Senate. Of the seven thousand adherents, perhaps the majority was put to death, while many were imprisoned and the places of worship demolished.³ By decree of the Senate, no Bacchanalian rites could thereafter be celebrated in Rome or Italy, but in case any person felt it a religious duty to carry on the worship, he might do so under severe restrictions by getting special permission of the authorities.⁴ This saving clause makes it very clear that this was not a religious persecution, but that the cult was suppressed on moral grounds.⁵

A century and a quarter later the state attempted a similar repression for like reasons of the Isis cult. But at this time the cult was so firmly established that in spite of repeated attempts to destroy it⁶ the religion survived and became practically a tolerated cult at Rome,⁷ although under Tiberius it was again temporarily suppressed, the temples destroyed, the priests crucified, and the worshipers banished from Italy, all because of the immorality perpetrated under the cloak of its rites.⁸

In the Roman provinces toleration was even more com-

¹ Livy, *op. cit.*, xxxix, 13.

² Livy, *op. cit.*, xxxix, 8, 16.

³ Livy, *op. cit.*, xxxix, 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵ Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd. ed., p. 9.

⁶ Tertullian, *Apology*, 6; Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, xl, p. 47; Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et dictorum morabilia*, i, 3, 3; Dio Cassius, *op. cit.*, xlii, 26. *Vide* Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., pp. 10 *et seq.*

⁷ Dio Cassius, *op. cit.*, xlvii, 15; Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes*, ii, 73; See however Dio Cassius, *op. cit.*, liii, 2; liv, 6.

⁸ Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae*, 18, 3, 4; Tacitus, *Annals*, ii, 85.

plete than in Italy and at Rome. In the provinces supervision of morality was hardly attempted. Interference here was confined to cases where it was necessary to preserve order or to prevent such enormities as human sacrifices.¹

The treatment of monotheistic Judaism² was not essentially different from that of the other religions. In the provinces toleration was practically complete; at Rome the difficulties of the Jews were due to the fact that, for one reason or another, they fell under the ordinary rule of intolerance. Their temporary expulsion at the time of Tiberius was occasioned by the fact that a noble Roman lady, a convert to Judaism, had been victimized by a number of Jewish adventurers.³ Four thousand Jews who were Roman citizens were enrolled in the army and sent to Sardinia; the others were to be expelled from Italy unless before a certain day they should put aside the profane rites.⁴ But this suppression fell not alone upon the Jews, for both Tacitus and Suetonius⁵ connect it with that of other foreign cults, particularly the Egyptian. Under Claudius they were banished from Rome because they were continually disturbing the peace and good order of the state at the instigation of one Chrestus.⁶

¹ For example in Africa, Tertullian, *Apol.*, 9; and the Druids in Gaul, Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25; Pliny, *Natural History*, xxx, i, 13, 14.

² *Vide* Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, vol. v, pp. 487 *et seq.*; English translation in *The Provinces of the Roman Empire* (New York, 1887), ch. xi.

³ *Vide* Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., pp. 21 *et seq.*; *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1907, vol. lxxxii, *loc. cit.*, p. 14; Mommsen, "Der Religionsfrevel nach römischen Recht," in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 1890, vol. lxiv, p. 308.

⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, ii, 85.

⁵ Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 36. *Vide* also Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, xviii, 3, 5; Philo, *Legatio ad Caium*, 23, 14, 43.

⁶ Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25. Iudaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes Roma expulit. Compare Dio Cassius, lx, 6. *Vide* Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., p. 22.

But in spite of the toleration which was extended to the Jews, they were coming to be regarded both at Rome and in the provinces with an increasing hatred and contempt.¹ When Christianity appeared as an offshoot of Judaism, this antipathy was part of their heritage.

But as time went on and as the Christians came to be distinguished from the Jews, this hostility toward the Christians was greatly accentuated. In the first place they were regarded by the Romans as a deplorable, unauthorized, and desperate faction, made up of credulous women and gathered from the very scum of mankind.² But still worse, they interfered with the established order of society, with trade interests,³ with family life,⁴ with popular amusements,⁵ with the ordinary religious observances,⁶ and with the lax but conventional morality of the time.⁷ They avoided military service,⁸ and were averse to all civic duties and offices.⁹ To a people whose first duty was to the state this lack of interest in public affairs rendered the Christians worthy of their utmost contempt.¹⁰

But the mere fact that the Christians were hated and were now and then suppressed by the Roman government

¹ Tacitus, *History*, v. 2-5; Juvenal, xiv, 100; Quintilian, *De Institutione Oratoria*, iii, 7, 21; Pliny, *Nat. His.*, xiii, 4.

² Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 8.

³ Acts, xix, 23 *et seq.*; Pliny ad Trajan, 96.

⁴ Tert., *Apol.*, 3.

⁵ Tert., *Apol.*, 38; *De Spectaculis*.

⁶ Tert., *De Idolatria*; *Apol.*, 42; Min. Felix, *Oct.*, 8, 12.

⁷ *Vide* particularly Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., pp. 34 *et seq.*

⁸ Tert., *De Idol.*, 19. *Vide* A. Harnack, *Militia Christi* (Tübingen, 1905), pp. 46 *et seq.*

⁹ Tert., *Apol.*, 42; *De Idol.*, 17; *De Corona Militis*, i, 15.

¹⁰ Tacitus, *Ann.*, xv, 44; Tert., *Apol.*, 7, 9, 35, 37, 46, 49; *Vide* Weinel, *Die Stellung des Urchristentums zum Staat* (Tübingen, 1908); Goguel, *Les chrétiens et l'empire romain à l'époque du Nouveau Testament* (Paris, 1908); A. Bigelmair, *Die Beteiligung der Christen am öffentlichen Leben* (München, 1902).

does not imply the introduction of any new religious policy. The policy applied to the oriental cults was applied to the Christians. The sect was reputed to be shockingly immoral and there were many reasons why they were dangerous to the good order and security of the state.

The rumors concerning their immorality were due in part to the fact that they held secret meetings in private houses under cover of darkness,¹ where they were believed to give free license to their impious lusts, to revel in the practice of incest,² and even to feed upon the blood of their own infant children. The taunts and accusations hurled at them from all sides³ not only give us an insight into the attitude of the populace, but show also that they were regarded as dangerous to the peace and good order of the state. For example, they were reproached for worshipping the cross, the sun, and the head of an ass,⁴ and for bearing the name of one who had been crucified by Pontius Pilate.⁵ Their belief was a new and mischievous superstition,⁶ for the sake of which they were guilty of an inflexible obstinacy.⁷ They were charged with being impious,⁸ irreligious,⁹ atheists,¹⁰ guilty of sacrilege¹¹ and of treason (*majestas*),

¹ Min. Felix, *Oct.*, 9, 10.

² Tert., *Apol.*, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9; *Ad Nat.*, i, 2, 15, 16; Justin, *Apology*, i, 26; Athenagoras, *Libellus pro Christianis*, ch. 3, ch. 16; Min. Felix, *Oct.*, 9, 30, 31.

³ Vide Callewaert, "La Méthode dans la recherche de la base juridique des premières persécutions," in *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1911, vol. xii, pp. 7 et seq.

⁴ Tert., *Apol.*, 16; *Ad Nat.*, i, 11, 12, 14; Min. Felix, *Oct.*, 9.

⁵ Tert., *Apol.*, 3; *Ad Nat.*, i, 4; Min. Felix, *Oct.*, 9.

⁶ Suetonius, *Nero*, 16.

⁷ Pliny, *Epistulae ad Trajanum* (ed. Kukula, Leipzig, 1912), 96.

⁸ Min. Felix, *Oct.*, 9.

⁹ Tert., *Apol.*, 24.

¹⁰ Justin Martyr, *Apol.*, i, 6; Athenagoras, *Libellus pro Christianis*, 4; Clement, *Stromata*, vii, 1, 4; Vide Mommsen, *Röm. Straf.*, p. 575, note 2.

¹¹ Tert., *Ad Scapulam*, i; *Apol.*, 10.

imperial¹ and divine,² and with being public enemies³ who refused to offer sacrifices to the emperor.⁴ In a word, the Christians were held to be guilty of every crime, to be the enemies of the gods, of the emperors, of the laws, of good morals, and even of nature.⁵

Two facts, however, must be emphasized. In the first place, and this is extremely important, most of these accusations and taunts refer to the second or third century. In the second place, they were for the most part the current accusations of the populace. As Callewaert⁶ expresses it, these beliefs were the cause of the cries of death and popular tumults;⁷ they stimulated the zeal or excited the animosity of the magistrates.⁸ They might be the motive invoked to excuse or to justify the measures taken against the Christians, but not for a moment should it be supposed that they were the specific charges made in the indictments of the Christians.

This question of the specific charge upon which the Christians were formally indicted, tried, and punished has been much disputed and presents many difficulties. The appearance in 1890 of Mommsen's epoch-making article on *Crimes of Religion in Roman Law*⁹ has produced vol-

¹ Tert., *Ad Scap.*, i; *Apol.*, 4, 28, 29, 30, 31; *Ad Nat.*, i, 17; Cf., Athenagoras, *Libellus pro Christianis*, i.

² Tert., *Apol.*, 4, 10, 24, 27.

³ Tert., *Apol.*, 2, 10, 24, 35, 37; *Ad Nat.*, i, 17; Lactantius *De mortibus persecutorum*, II.

⁴ Vide Rev. d'hist. eccl., vol. xii, 1911, loc. cit., p. 6.

⁵ Tert., *Apol.*, 2; *Ad Nat.*, 2. Cf., Justin, *Apology*, i, 3; Min. Felix, *Octavius*, 28.

⁶ Rev. d'hist. eccl., 1911, vol. xii, loc. cit., pp. 7 et seq.

⁷ Tert., *Apol.*, 35, 37; Eusebius, *Church History*, v, 1.

⁸ Tert., *Apol.*, 49, 50; Melito in Eusebius, *op. cit.*, iv, 26; Rescript of Hadrian in Eusebius, *op. cit.*, iv, 9; Cf., *Martyrdom of Polycarp* in J. Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. iii.

⁹ Mommsen, "Der Religionsfrevel nach römischen Recht," in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 1890, vol. lxiv, p. 389.

umes of controversial literature upon the subject. The solutions which so far have been offered may be conveniently grouped under three heads: first, no specific charge, but rather a repression by measures of police in virtue of the power of *coercitio*; secondly, accusation and trial for violation of the Roman criminal law, particularly for the crime of *majestas* or treason, and also for sacrilege, immorality, magic, incest, murder, etc.; thirdly, a similar procedure under a special law issued by Nero, *institutum Neronianum*, which proscribed Christianity as such, namely, "*Non licet esse Christianos*".

The first solution mentioned was offered by Mommsen in the article referred to above. Mommsen showed that all the previous cases of suppression of cults had been by administrative measures of police. Precisely the same thing was true of the treatment of the Christian sect, at least in the great majority of cases. Mommsen explained that the Roman magistrates who participated in the *imperium*, both at Rome and in the provinces, possessed in addition to their regular criminal jurisdiction a very extensive police power, the *jus coercendi*.¹ By virtue of this power of *coercitio* the magistrate could take any measures which he judged necessary or useful for checking any disorder or abuse or to maintain the order and security of the state.² In the exercise of this power the magistrates were not restricted to the regular mode of procedure; on the contrary, nothing was fixed, neither the nature of the offense, the form of the process, nor the penalties, so long as the penalty was not contrary to custom. The whole process was purely arbitrary, and its nature was largely determined by what the magistrate believed to be demanded by the exigencies of public order and security.³

¹ *Historische Zeitschrift*, 1890, vol. lxiv, *loc. cit.*, p. 398.

² *Ibid.*, p. 398.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 414; *Röm. Straf.*, pp. 40, 56, 123, 523.

It was in the exercise of this unlimited power of *coercitio*, says Mommsen, that most of the Christians were tried and punished. Accordingly, the status of the Christians depended largely upon the individual attitude of the governors of the various provinces and upon the trend of popular opinion.¹ The interventions of the emperors were merely administrative measures intended to regulate the exercise of this power.²

This theory at least has the advantage of clearing up many difficult points in the suppression of the Christian sect by the Roman government. First, and most important, it explains why the periods of repression were intermittent, and why the persecutions were local and of varying degrees of severity.³ It also explains the lack of any specific definition of the crime for which the Christians were convicted,⁴ and the anomalies and irregularities in the procedure,⁵ of which the apologists so frequently complained.⁶ These very facts, on the other hand, become serious stumbling blocks in the way of accepting the theory of a special law proscribing the Christians as such.⁷

¹ *Hist. Zeit., loc. cit.*, p. 410; Harnack, "Christenverfolgungen," in Hauck, *Realencyklopädie*, vol. iii, p. 826; *Vide* Tertullian, *Apology*, 2; Justin Martyr, *Apology*, ii, ch. 2.

² *Hist. Zeit., loc. cit.*, p. 413; Weis, *Christenverfolgungen* (München, 1899), p. 18; Callewaert, "Les premiers chrétiens furent-ils persécutés par édits généraux ou par mesures de police" in *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1902, vol. iii, pp. 5 *et seq.*

³ *Vide Hist. Zeit., loc. cit.*, p. 413.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 410.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 413 *et seq.*; Weis, *op. cit.*, p. 16; *Vide* however, Callewaert, "Le délit du christianisme dans les deux premiers siècles," in *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1903, vol. lxxiv, ch. ii.

⁶ Weis, *op. cit.*, pp. 126 *et seq.* For a dissenting opinion *vide Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1903, vol. lxxiv, *loc. cit.*, p. 55. *Vide* Tertullian, *Apology*, 2.

⁷ *Hist. Zeit., loc. cit.*, pp. 395 *et seq.*, where Mommsen cites Tert., *Apol.*, 24. *Vide* also p. 412.

But in both the *Religionsfrevel* and the *Strafrecht*,¹ more particularly in the latter, Mommsen maintains that while the suppression of the Christians actually took place through the exercise of this extraordinary power of immediate action called *coercitio*, legally they were guilty of *majestas* or high treason, and could also be regularly accused and tried upon this charge. The refusal of the Christians to take the oaths and to offer the sacrifices required of them constituted a twofold crime of *majestas*, the crime against the gods, and that against the emperor. Both offences came under the single head of *majestas*.²

Mommsen goes on to explain that the Roman religion, like all religions of antiquity, was intimately connected with the state. It was, however, one of the immutable maxims of Roman administration not to exact manifestations of belief in the national worship nor to do more than exercise a simple police surveillance over foreign cults.³ This toleration was extended even to monotheistic Judaism, which remained a *religio licita* even after the taking of Jerusalem.⁴ But this toleration had its limits. The citizens of Rome, and for that matter of any municipality, could not at the same time be Jews and recognize the gods of the state. To be a worshiper of Jehovah was to apostatize from the national religion. Such apostacy constituted a crime at Roman law, called by Tertullian, *crimen laesae religionis*.⁵ The question arose in two cases, first, when the Jews became Roman citizens; secondly, when a Roman citizen was converted to Judaism. In the first case, the question would come up only when a Jew became a citizen

¹ Mommsen, *Römisches Strafrecht* (Leipzig, 1899), pp. 569 *et seq.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 569, note 1.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 570.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 571 *et seq.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 573. Improperly called by some *sacrilegium*.

through manumission.¹ The second case was the more important, particularly after the establishment of the principate, with its emphasis on the imperial religion, when this apostasy was treated as a capital crime.²

But as for the Christians, continues Mommsen, the mere profession of their religion was at first sight a crime of *majestas* of the gravest sort, namely, *perduellio*.³ The Christian, who was a man without a nation, and whose community had never had a political basis, was necessarily an apostate from polytheism, and was hence properly designated as *ἀθεός*.⁴ As a logical result the avowal made before the tribunal that one was a Christian was considered and punished as an avowal of the crime of *majestas*.⁵ Or, as the Christians expressed it, the mere name, as evidence of such atheism, constituted a crime in the eye of the law.⁶

¹ Mommsen here gives but a single example, the expulsion under Tiberius referred to above, and admits that even this case was perhaps a simple measure of police. Callewaert, "Les premiers chrétiens et l'accusation de lèse-majesté," in *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1904, vol. lxxvi, p. 10, says that Mommsen has failed to prove that the practice of the Jewish religion by a Jew who had become a citizen was a crime in law.

² Mommsen, *op. cit.*, p. 574. Here Mommsen gives but three examples, the expulsion under Tiberius, the case of Pomponia Graecina, who had been condemned before a domestic tribunal for *superstitio extranea* (Tacitus, *Annals*, xiii, 32), and the case of Domitilla and Flavius Clemens (Dio, lxxvii, 14). The last case is very doubtful indeed in its application (*Vide infra*, chap. iii on Domitian). Mommsen recognizes the weakness of his evidence, for he admits his theory is not easily reconciled with the fact that Domitian recognized the legality of citizens being Jews and collected the Jewish tax from them (*Ibid.*, p. 754, note 3; *Vide* Suetonius, *Dom.*, 12).

³ *Vide* Mommsen, *op. cit.*, p. 575, note 1. Mommsen sees the proof in the use of the term *hostis publicus* by the Christians (Tert., *Apol.*, 2, 24; Lactantius, *De mort. pers.*, 11).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 575, note 2.

⁵ Pliny ad Trajan, 96. Mommsen also cites Hermas as belonging to the period of Hadrian or Antoninus Pius.

⁶ Mommsen, in *Expositor*, 1893, vol. viii, p. 3.

This rule applied alike to citizen and non-citizen. In both cases there was apostasy from the religion of the empire, and the penalty is the same in principle, though more rigorous against the Roman citizen.¹ If the crime of apostasy appeared in an organized form the penalty, as in the case of sedition, was not confined to the leaders, but singled them out in preference.² The absence of punishment in case the accused recanted was a regular inducement to recant in crimes of opinion or in crimes committed in mass.³ Mommsen recognizes, however, that the oath taken in the name of the gods and the sacrifice which is offered to them were only tests for proving the orthodoxy of those who, accused of apostasy, denied this apostasy or else recanted.⁴

The two theories of Mommsen as outlined above received enthusiastic and at first almost universal support.⁵

¹ Pliny ad Trajan, 96. *Vide also* Eusebius, *Church History*, v, i, 47.

² Mom., *Röm. Straf.*, p. 577.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 578, who quotes Pliny ad Trajan, 96; Eus., *Ch. Hist.*, v, i, 47; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2, 13; "Acta Martyrum Scillitanorum," in Robinson, *Texts and Studies* (Cambridge, 1891), p. 119, note 1.

⁴ Mom., *op. cit.*, p. 578. But *cf.*, K. Neumann, *Der römische Staat und die allgemeine Kirche* (Leipzig, 1899), p. 15, who is referring to the period of Domitian.

⁵ Wagener, *op. cit.*, in *Bul. de l'Acad. roy. de Bruxelles*, 1893, xxvi, pp. 283-344; Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire* (London and New York, 1893); Hardy, *op. cit.*; Beaudouin, in *Revue historique*, 1898, vol. lxxviii, p. 153; R. Seeberg, *Der Apologet Aristides* (Erlangen, 1894); Wehofer, *Die Apologie Justins* (Rome, 1897); Harnack, "Christenverfolgungen," in Hauck, *Realencyclopädie*, 1897, vol. iii, p. 823; "Das Edikt des Antoninus Pius," in *Texte u. Untersuchungen*, vol. xiii, 4, (Leipzig, 1895); "Der Vorwurf des Atheismus," in *T. u. U.*, xxvi, 4, 1905. In this last work Harnack gives *Atheism* as a formal juristic accusation, but says it became a crime only when it was manifested by the omission of acts of worship which were obligatory upon the citizens (p. 11). *Vide* Mommsen, *Röm. Straf.*, p. 568; Weis, *Christenverfolgungen*, (München, 1899). Weis here emphasizes the use of measure of police, but seems to have changed his

Some of his followers have emphasized the administrative power of *coercitio*, while others have insisted rather upon crimes at law, particularly *majestas*.

But while all the partisans of the theory of suppression because of crimes at common law recognize *majestas* as the chief crime of which the Christians were accused, some of them¹ invoke other crimes as well. Le Blant, for example, groups sacrilege² along with *majestas*, treason against the gods or the emperors, and maintains that the Christians were also punished as magicians³ and even as murderers and conspirators.⁴ Conrat adds incest and infanticide to the list.⁵ Moreover, they argue, the law cited by Cicero⁶ could still be invoked during the principate against the *religio illicita*, and hence, *superstitio nova et extranea consti-*

point of view somewhat in his review of Profumo's theory in *Literarische Rundschau*, 1906, col. 51; Linsenmayer, *Bekämpfung des Christentums* (München, 1905), pp. 27 *et seq.*; Bigelmair, *Beteiligung der Christen im öffentlichen Leben*, 1902, pp. 28 *et seq.*; F. Augar, "Die Frau im röm. Christenprozess," *T. u. U.*, xxviii, 4, 1905. Augar rejects the theory of *coercitio*, and holds that the process is one of *majestas* of the two varieties of *perduellio* and *crimen laesae religionis* (p. 66). H. Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church* (Cincinnati, 1906). Other scholars who have followed Mommsen are cited by Callewaert, in *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1911, *loc. cit.*, p. 10.

¹ Particularly E. Le Blant, *Les persécuteurs et les martyrs*, (Paris, 1893), pp. 51 *et seq.*; F. Maassen, *Ueber die Gründe des Kampfes zwischen dem heidnische-römische Staat und das Christentum* (Vienna, 1882); Conrat, *Die Christenverfolgungen im römische Reiche vom Standpunkte der Juristen* (Leipzig, 1897); Marx, *Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte*, (Trèves, 1906), p. 54.

² Le Blant, *op. cit.*, pp. 51 *et seq.*; Conrat, *op. cit.*, p. 20. *Vide* also Görres, in Kraus, *Real-encyclopädie der christlichen Alterthümer*, vol. i, p. 216; Neumann, *Der röm. Staat.*, vol. i, p. 12.

³ Le Blant, *op. cit.*, pp. 61 *et seq.*, where he cites a long list of authorities. Conrat, *op. cit.* *Vide* Linsenmayer, *Bekämpfung des Christentums*, p. 56; Gsell, *Domitian*, p. 311.

⁴ Le Blant, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁵ Conrat, *op. cit.*, pp. 29 *et seq.*

⁶ Cicero, *De Legibus*, ii, 8, 19. Quoted *infra* p. 122.

tuted a crime. Conrat believes that in this theory lies the explanation of the intermittent nature of the persecutions and of the fact that only the leaders of the Christians were singled out for punishment. Since the trial was for a recognized legal crime, the case was necessarily introduced by private prosecution (*accusatio*), which entailed upon the accuser very heavy responsibilities which few would undertake.¹

The theory proposed in 1905 by Profumo² is as unique as it is interesting. Basing his theory upon his interpretation of Tertullian's *institutum Neronianum*,³ he rejects both the theory of *coercitio* and of the existence of a special law proscribing Christianity as such. He believes that Tertullian's phrase refers to the three crimes of immorality, sacrilege or atheism, and *majestas*. By a rule of evidence⁴ called *institutum* these three crimes had at the time of Tiberius been so intimately associated that the proof of one furnished legally the proof of a state of mind which implied guilt of the other two.⁵ In the case of the Christians this guilt was usually proven by their refusal to sacrifice. Nero, he believes, sent a *mandatum*⁶ to the magistrates of Rome and the provinces that the Christians should be punished under this *institutum*, and Tertullian accordingly named it the *institutum Neronianum*.⁷

¹ Conrat, *op. cit.*, pp. 10 *et seq.*

² A. Profumo, *Le fonti ed i tempi dell' incendio Neroniano* (Rome, 1905), pp. 197-353.

³ Tert., *Ad Nat.*, i, 7.

⁴ Profumo, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 228, 236.

⁶ Tert., *Ad Scap.*, 4; Profumo, *op. cit.*, pp. 261 *et seq.*

⁷ In its essentials this theory is followed by A. Pieper, *Christentum, römische Kaisertum und heidnischer Staat* (Münster, 1907), pp. 59 *et seq.* Vide also Weis, in *Literarische Rundschau*, 1906, col 51 *et seq.* For a refutation of this theory see Callewaert, in *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, vol. viii, 1907, *loc. cit.*, pp. 751 *et seq.*

That the process against the Christians was by virtue of a special law is by no means a new explanation, though it is but recently that it has come to occupy a place alongside the opinion of Mommsen as one of the possible solutions of the problem.¹ The development and wide acceptance of this opinion has been due very largely to a series of brilliant articles by Callewaert.²

According to this theory there existed a penal law which expressly prohibited anyone from being a Christian. The fundamental idea, if not the exact words, of this law was, "Non licet esse Christianos," and the technical denomination of the crime was, "esse Christianum."³ Accordingly

¹ P. Allard has been a consistent supporter of this idea in all of his numerous works on the persecutions. *Vide*, for example, *Histoire des persécutions* (Paris, 1903), 3rd ed.; *Les Persécutions et la critique* (Paris, 1903); *Dix leçons sur le martyre* (Paris, 1906); So also Boissier, "La lettre de Pline au sujet des chrétiens," in *Revue archéologique*, 1876, xxxi, p. 119; P. Batiffol, "L'Église naissante" in *Revue Biblique*, 1894, vol. iii, pp. 503-521, and *L'Église naissante et le catholicisme* (Paris, 1909), p. 26; L. Guérin, "Étude sur le fondement juridique des persécutions dirigées contre les chrétiens pendant les deux premiers siècles de notre ère," in *Nouvelle Revue historique de droit français et étranger*, 1895, pp. 601-616, 713-737; J. Rambaud, *Le Droit criminel romain dans les actes des martyrs*, 2nd ed. (Lyons, 1907); Duchesne, *Histoire ancienne de l'Église* (Paris, 1906), vol. i, p. 109.

² Callewaert, "Les premiers chrétiens furent-ils persécutés par edicts généraux ou par mesures de police?" in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 1901, vol. ii, pp. 771-779; 1902, vol. iii, pp. 5-15, 324-348, 601-614; "Le Délit du christianisme dans les deux premiers siècles," in *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1903, vol. lxxiv, pp. 28-55; "Les Premiers chrétiens et l'accusation de lèse-majesté," in *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1904, vol. lxxvi, pp. 5-28; "Les Persécutions contre les chrétiens dans la politique religieuse de l'empire romain," in *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1907, vol. lxxxii, pp. 5-19; "La Méthode dans la recherche de la base juridique des premières persécutions," in *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1911, vol. xii, pp. 5-16, 633-651. In the last article Callewaert has given a complete list of all scholars who have followed this theory, p. 13.

³ *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1901, vol. ii, *loc. cit.*, p. 789; Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, vol. i, p. 161.

the mere profession of Christianity constituted a crime punishable with death.¹ This law was formulated by Nero,² and remained in force during the first two centuries or even to the time of Decius, who formulated a new legal policy for dealing with the Christians.³

This law did not appear as an anomaly or even as an exceptional measure in the treatment of religious matters by the Roman state; ⁴ on the contrary, it harmonized perfectly with the traditional treatment and proceeded naturally from the fundamental principle of Roman religious policy.⁵ It was based upon the principle expressed by Cicero,⁶ and was due to the fact that the Christians were a menace to morals and public safety.⁷ The repression began under Nero as a temporary measure of police.⁸ But as soon as the police discovered the number and the irreconcilable obstinacy of the accused, the many ramifications of the sect, and the continuance of a propaganda which would perpetuate the same supposed abuses, the temporary and local measures of police naturally gave way to a general and permanent law.⁹ It was to this law that Tertullian referred when he spoke of the *institutum Neronianum*.¹⁰

According to Callewaert, a correct interpretation of Ter-

¹ *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1911, vol. xii, *loc. cit.*, p. 13.

² *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1911, vol. iii, *loc. cit.*, p. 328. Cf., Tertullian, *Apology*, ch. iv.

³ *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1911, vol. xii, *loc. cit.*, p. 13; 1901, vol. ii, p. 781. Cf., Tertullian, *Apol.*, ch. v.

⁴ *Nouvelle Rev. hist. de droit*, 1895, *loc. cit.*, p. 721.

⁵ *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1907, vol. lxxxii, *loc. cit.*, p. 7.

⁶ Cicero, *De Legibus*, ii, 8, 19. Cf., Tertullian, *Apol.*, ch. v.

⁷ *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1907, vol. lxxxii, *loc. cit.*, pp. 16 et seq.

⁸ *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1902, vol. iii, *loc. cit.*, pp. 338 et seq.; p. 347.

⁹ *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1907, vol. lxxxii, *loc. cit.*, pp. 324 et seq.

¹⁰ *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1902, vol. iii, *loc. cit.*, pp. 324 et seq. Cf., Tertullian, *Ad. Nat.*, i, 7.

tullian, who is the all-important source for the whole question of the legal basis of the persecutions, proves the existence of such a law. In the case of every text, particularly in the case of Tertullian, it is of the greatest importance to find out whether the charge against the Christians is to be taken in the sense of a technical legal accusation, or in the sense of a current extra-judicial imputation.¹ A study of the plan of the *Apology* reveals the fact that from the seventh chapter on Tertullian refuted the popular and current charges, while from the fourth to the sixth he dealt explicitly with the legal situation.² In the fourth chapter he discussed the unjustness of the law—"Non licet esse vos". In the following chapter he spoke of the origin of such laws, and in this connection referred to the persecution under Nero, and in the sixth chapter enumerated similar laws that had been permitted to lapse.³

The supporters of this theory see further proof in the letters of Pliny and Trajan.⁴ The whole procedure of Pliny proves that the crime was to be a Christian.⁵ Furthermore, the rescript of Trajan proves that their crime was legally *esse Christianum*, and that the formal reason for acquittal was the negation of the *esse Christianum*.⁶ Like most rescripts this presupposed a law of which it only defined the meaning.

Lastly this theory is supported by Sulpicius Severus,⁷

¹ *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1911, vol. xii, *loc. cit.*, p. 648.

² *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1901, vol. ii, *loc. cit.*, p. 778; 1911, vol. xii, *loc. cit.*, pp. 646 *et seq.*; *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1904, vol. lxxvi, *loc. cit.*, pp. 16 *et seq.*

³ *Vide infra*, pt. ii, ch. i, where these sources are quoted.

⁴ Pliny ad Trajan, 96, 97. *Vide* ch. iv, in pt. i and pt. ii.

⁵ *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1902, vol. iii, *loc. cit.*, pp. 9 *et seq.*; 1911, vol. xii, *loc. cit.*, p. 643.

⁶ *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1911, vol. xii, *loc. cit.*, p. 643.

⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicon*, ii, 29.

who distinguishes two phases of the Neronian persecution. Callewaert supposes that Sulpicius used for his authority Ulpian's *De officio proconsulis*,¹ which was still in existence at the time.²

Moreover, the authorities prove overwhelmingly that the Christians were punished for their religion and not for murder, robbery, or for any other ordinary crime.³ The entire procedure, the accusation, the interrogation, and the sentence, all indicate that the crime was *esse Christianum*.⁴ The proof is particularly clear in the case of the sentence, for according to the Roman law the sentence should be written and read publicly⁵ and should mention the crime which constituted the legal ground for accusation.⁶ In view of the evidence the sentence could have been for no other crime than that of being a Christian.⁷

In stating these different theories I have endeavored to express each as completely and as forcefully as space would permit. However, before subscribing to any one of these explanations, one should become familiar not only with the documents which relate directly to this problem but with the whole question of the relationship between the Roman government and Christianity. The fact is that our infor-

¹ According to Lactantius (*Divinarum Institutionum Liber v*, ch. i) Ulpian had collected in the seventh book those nefarious rescripts of the princes which taught by what penalties it was necessary to afflict those who confessed themselves worshippers of God.

² *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1902, vol. iii, *loc. cit.*, pp. 604 *et seq.*

³ *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1903, vol. lxxiv, *loc. cit.*, pp. 31 *et seq.* *Vide* Tertullian, *Apol.*, 2, 21, 27, 49, 50.

⁴ *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1903, vol. lxxiv, *loc. cit.*, pp. 36 *et seq.*

⁵ Mommsen, *Röm. Straf.*, p. 447 and note 5; Le Blant, *Les Persécuteurs et les martyrs* (Paris, 1893), pp. 219-228; Tertullian, *Apol.*, 2.

⁶ Mommsen, *op. cit.*, p. 448. Tertullian, *Apol.*, 2; *Ad. nat.*, i, 3.

⁷ *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1903, vol. lxxiv, *loc. cit.*, pp. 36 *et seq.*

mation is very meager at best, and that we can not hope to determine authoritatively the exact legal status of the Christians; yet the following opinion may at least serve as a working hypothesis, even though it may not prove to be a solution of the difficulty.

In the first place, no one of the above theories can be accepted unconditionally. The case which Callewaert has developed to prove that the crime was *esse Christianum* is practically unanswerable, but his proof is based upon the late second-century evidence, and hence proves the case only for the period after Trajan and Hadrian. There is not room for the slightest doubt that after the rescripts of these emperors Christianity constituted a crime punishable by death. In fact, it is by no means improbable that, as a result of the precedent set by Nero, there were cases where persons were condemned as Christians even during the late first and early second century;¹ but if so it was because the term Christian designated a person who was considered hopelessly immoral, who was dangerous to public order and security, and who was guilty of every crime. It was not because he had been definitely and legally proscribed or because his religion had been expressly declared to be a *religio illicita*.²

In fact, the existence of a law dating from the time of Nero is totally inconsistent with the facts as we know them. A law to the effect that Christians were not to be permitted to exist would certainly imply a general and more or less continuous persecution. That this was far from being the case will appear in the following chapters. Such a law would have meant thousands of martyrs if not the

¹ Hardy, *Christianity and the Roman Government*, 2nd. ed., pp. 96 *et seq.*

² For the opposite view see especially Wieseler, *Die Christenverfolgungen der Caesaren* (Gütersloh, 1878), p. II.

actual extermination of the sect, whereas in reality the total number of martyrs up to the time of Trajan would probably not exceed a few score.

Moreover this theory is not supported by any satisfactory evidence. The only source, at all trustworthy, which can be appealed to is an incidental remark by Tertullian.¹ But it must be remembered that Tertullian wrote nearly a century and a half after the events described, after the rescript of Trajan had made Christianity a proscribed religion. In the fourth chapter of the *Apology* Tertullian refers to the laws against the Christians and discusses their injustice. In the following chapter he speaks of the origin of such laws, and begins with the legendary story of Tiberius and his attempt to receive Christ among the *dii novensiles*. He then makes the statement that Nero was the first to persecute the Christians.² Although he has not even implied that Nero issued any law proscribing the Christians, nevertheless it is from this statement, taken in connection with the preceding chapter, that Callewaert concluded that Nero issued an edict to the effect that *Non licet esse Christianos*. In Tertullian's statement there is absolutely no proof that Nero issued a law proscribing Christianity.³

But, after all, with the essentials in the theory of Callewaert we must necessarily agree. The essential part of the theory is that there were in existence laws which made the profession of Christianity a crime punishable by death. It is only in the matter of time that we are compelled to disagree. The definite legislation dates from the time of Tra-

¹ Tertullian, *Apol.*, 5. Cf., *Ad Nat.*, i, 6.

² *Vide* pt. ii, ch. ii for all sources relating to the Neronian persecution.

³ A discussion as to whether the rescripts of Trajan and Hadrian presupposed such an edict will be found in chs. iv and v. As for the evidence of Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* ii, 29, it is quite worthless on this point. *Vide* pt. ii, ch. ii.

jan, and not from the time of Nero.¹ It was the legislation of Trajan which was in effect at the time of Tertullian and it was to this legislation that he referred.²

So far as the half century between the first outbreak under Nero and the rescript of Trajan is concerned the solution seems very simple. In the first place, there was nothing even resembling a persecution, except possibly in some places in Asia Minor where the Christians were particularly numerous and heartily disliked. It is pretty generally agreed that the first suppression under Nero was by measures of police. This suppression would in turn serve as a precedent for the administrative authorities throughout the empire.³ There is no reason to believe that any special policy was adopted until the time of Trajan. Whatever martyrdoms occurred before the rescript of Trajan took place as a result of police suppression in virtue of the power of *coercitio*. The reputed immorality of the Christians, the fact that they were believed to be guilty of all kinds of crimes, or even the fact that they were a cause of popular disturbances and disorders would be ample justification for such police interference.

Such repression may also have been due to the fact that their religion constituted an illegal cult. Under the law which required all associations to be licensed by the Emperor or Senate⁴ the external organization of the Chris-

¹ *Vide* pt. i, ch. iv, p. 96.

² Tertullian, *Apol.*, 4. Weis (*Christenverfolgungen*, pp. 130 *et seq.*), believes that Tertullian refers to laws in a wider sense, including for example former decisions, and instructions to subordinates. Cf., Mommsen, *Römische Staatsrecht* (Leipzig, 1877), vol. iii, p. 311.

³ Weis, *op. cit.*, pp. 59 *et seq.*

⁴ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 32; *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinorum*, vi, 2193. *Vide* Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., p. 130; Linsenmayer, *Bekämpfung des Christentums*, pp. 35 *et seq.* *Vide* also Tertullian, *Apology*, c. 38, c. 39, quoted *infra* pt. ii, ch. i.

tians was illegal. However, this law was not as a rule rigidly enforced, particularly in the provinces, and, as a result, there were many associations, especially of a religious character, which were technically illegal, but which because of their insignificant or harmless nature, were left unmolested. Ordinarily, therefore, the Christians had nothing to fear from such a law, but there is no reason why at times their assemblies could not have been suppressed on this ground. But such occurrences would have been exceptional, and would by no means have constituted anything like a persecution. It would simply have amounted to a treatment which was shared by a large number of other similar organizations. Still, it may have been to this law that Tertullian was referring in the early chapters of the *Apology*, for when he discussed the origin of the laws against the Christians he began by explaining how Christianity had failed to become a *religio licita*.¹ In later chapters he implies that Christianity was regarded as such an illegal faction, though he says nothing to warrant the supposition that this was the cause of their persecution.²

The crimes of sacrilege, magic, homicide, and so forth, need not detain us long. Mommsen³ has shown that in juristic language the term sacrilege applied to the robbery of sacred objects, a crime of which the Christians certainly never were accused. It was only in a purely popular sense that it was used to refer to religious crimes in general,⁴ and it was in this sense that it was used concerning the Christians.⁵ As for the other crimes there is absolutely no

¹ Tertullian, *Apology*, 5.

² *Ibid.*, ch. 38, ch. 39; *cf.*, Tertullian, *De Ieiunio adversus Psychicos*, xiii.

³ *Hist. Zeit.*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 410 *et seq.* Vide Waltzing, *Tertullien*, p. 160.

⁴ As in Livy, iv, 20, 5.

⁵ Tert., *Apol.*, 2; *Ad Scap.*, 2, 4; Min. Felix, *Oct.*, 25, 28.

reliable evidence to show that the Christians were thus formally accused. In fact the evidence to the contrary is overwhelming. To be sure there may have been isolated cases where Christians were tried before the regular court (*quaestio*) upon some of these charges, but these cases were clearly exceptional.

Though technically Mommsen may be correct in saying that the Christians could legally fall under the accusation of *majestas*, the fact must be emphasized that so far as we know they were never during the first two centuries proceeded against on this formal charge. As Callewaert says, the history of St. Paul proves conclusively that the profession, even by a citizen, of a monotheistic religion was not considered by the magistrate as a legal offence.¹ Moreover, it was a well-established fact that a Christian could always save himself by apostatizing, whereas if he were on trial for *majestas* or for any recognized crime neither denial nor reparation would save him.² If the formal charge of *majestas* had been brought against the Christians for refusing to worship the emperor, the persecution would have been much more systematic and general than the evidence gives ground for supposing it was.³ If the Christians had been punished for *majestas* Pliny would have been familiar with the fact, but there is not a word in Pliny's letter to indicate that he punished the Christians as *reos majestatis*; on the contrary, it is a clear case of the use of the power of *coercitio*.

¹ *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1907, vol. lxxxii, *loc. cit.*, p. 16; 1904, vol. lxxvi, *loc. cit.*, pp. 13 *et seq.* *Vide* Acts, xviii, 12-17; xxiv, 5-6; xxv, 7 *et seq.*; xxvi 31 *et seq.* *Cf.*, Mommsen, "Die Rechtsverhältniss des Apostel Paulus" in *Zeitschrift für die Neutest. Wissen.*, 1901, pp. 81-96.

² *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1911, vol. xii, *loc. cit.*, p. 16.

³ Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

Indeed it is doubtful whether the Christians were formally accused of *majestas* even as late as the time of Tertullian. If we take into consideration the plan of the *Apolo-**gy*, we must admit that Tertullian was refuting popular and current accusations when he refutes the charge of *majestas* and of *crimen laesae religionis*. When in the tenth chapter he turns from the charges of secret crimes to the crimes of open day, he mentions *majestas* and sacrilege as the chief grounds upon which the Christians were accused. But sacrilege is certainly not used in a juristic sense and in all probability *majestas* is used in the same way, namely, to designate the current extra-legal accusations which were made against the Christians. As Callewaert expresses it,¹ the terms *crimen laesae religionis*, *laesae divinitatis*, *inreligiositatis*, *laedere deos*, *inreligiosi*, *impii*, *sacrilegi*, all express to the apologist practically the same idea, and apply to every action, speech or omission which constituted an injury or an offense to the deity. The same is true of the expression *hostis publicus*, which in legal language signifies one guilty of *majestas*, a traitor. Tertullian shows in the refutation of the charge that he uses the word only in the sense of a popular accusation.² Finally he indicates that the Christians were treated in a way entirely different from that of criminals guilty of *majestas*. While everyone should aid in seeking out the latter, it was forbidden to search out the former.³ Nor were the Christians permitted to defend themselves like other criminals; and if they apostatized they received absolute freedom.⁴ Moreover, no examination was made into the charge,⁵ and if they con-

¹ *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1904, vol. lxxvi, *loc. cit.*, p. 20. *Vide* Tertullian, *Apol.*, *passim*.

² Tertullian, *Apol.*, 35-39; *Ad Nat.*, i, 17. ³ Tertullian, *Apol.*, 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2; *Cf.*, Justin, *Apol.*, i, ch. iv; Min. Felix, *Oct.*, 28.

⁵ Tertullian, *Apol.*, ii, 4.

fessed they were tortured to secure a denial of the same.¹ This procedure would be inconceivable if the charge had been *majestas*.

The second-century evidence that the Christians were punished for the name alone is overwhelming.² Mommsen recognizes this fact, but attempts to explain it by saying that the avowal that one was a Christian was considered and punished as an avowal of the crime of *majestas*.³ This explanation, however, is merely a hypothesis on the part of Mommsen and is altogether unsupported by the evidence. He refers to Pliny's letter as proof, but the fact is that this letter proves quite the contrary. All his other references on this point prove only that the Christians were punished for their faith alone.⁴

¹ Tertullian, *Apol.*, 10; Min. Felix, *Oct.*, 37.

² Tertullian, *Apol.*, 2, 4; Athenagoras, *Lib. pro Christ.*, 1, 2; Tatian, *Oratio adversus Graecos*, 27; Justin, *Apology*, i, 4, 11.

³ Mommsen, *Röm. Straf.*, p. 575. *Supra* p. 28.

⁴ Mommsen, *op. cit.*, p. 575, note 3.

CHAPTER II

PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS UNDER NERO

CHRISTIANITY first appeared in the Roman State as a sect of the Jews. As such it shared with Judaism not only the tolerance but even the protection of the Roman Government. But if to the outside world the sect was indistinguishable from the body of Jews, to the Jews themselves the Christians were heretics and schismatics.¹ Almost from its very inception the new religion had to struggle against the jealousy and hatred of the mother cult. In this early struggle the Roman authorities, so far as they came into contact with the Christian sect, assumed the rôle of protectors, by preventing violence and outrage,² or, when accusation was brought by the Jews before the tribunals, by refusing to interfere in their sectarian differences.³

The first direct collision between the Roman Government and the rising sect appears to have taken place at Rome during the latter part of the reign of Nero. Unfortunately our information on this so-called "first persecution of the Christians" is very slight. But the very slightness of the evidence has resulted in volumes of discussion and commentary, and incidentally has raised many questions and controversies which we can never hope to settle.

Indeed, tragic as the event may have been, it has re-

¹ Acts, vii, 12; iv, 18; v, 28.

² Acts, xxi, 31, 32.

³ Acts, xviii, 14, 15; xxiv, 1-27; xxv, 8, 14 *et seq.*; xxvii, 7. Hardy, *Christianity and the Rom. Government*, 2nd ed., pp. 30 *et seq.*

ceived an amount of attention wholly out of proportion to its importance. It is true that it was the first act of hostility on the part of the Roman government against the Christian sect, but from the very nature of both parties this hostility was bound to come. But it is also true that the Christians enjoyed comparative peace for a considerable period after the first attack, and that this act of tyranny on the part of a single ruler, which directly affected only the city of Rome, was by no means the beginning of a series of persecutions as the later tradition would have it. In their efforts to make the good emperors appear as protectors and to make the tyrants appear as persecutors, the apologists little by little darkened the tradition of the Neronian persecution, until it came to be regarded in a light wholly unfounded in fact.¹

The cause of this first outbreak is a difficult and much disputed question. The traditional view is that Nero, who was accused of burning a large part of the city of Rome, in order to divert suspicion from himself, accused the Christians of setting fire to the city, and thus started the persecution. This view rests entirely upon the account of Tacitus, which until recently was received by historians without question. Twenty years ago, however, P. Batiffol raised, without answering, the question of the incongruity of the narrative of Tacitus with what seemed implied in the straightforward account of Suetonius, and suggested that Tacitus had combined two unconnected events, a fire in Rome and a persecution of the Christians, into one incident, in order to heighten the dramatic effect of his history.² A decade later Profumo, after an elaborate inves-

¹ J. Arnold, *Die Neronische Christenverfolgung* (Leipzig, 1888), p. 115.

² P. Batiffol, "L'église naissante," in *Revue Biblique*, vol. iii, 1894, p. 514.

tigation, reached the conclusion that Tacitus was either himself mistaken or else he had intentionally misstated the situation, in making the persecution the result of the fire.¹ As a matter of fact, he says, no one, either pagan or Christian was punished as an incendiary; the attention of Nero was drawn to the Christians in the year following that of the fire through the conspiracy of Piso.² A certain slave or freedman, according to Profumo, by refusing to take the required oaths at the trial, caused the denunciation of his religion. Two years later two other critics, Klette and Bacchus, writing independently, also broke away from the traditional explanation of the cause of the persecution. Klette held that the whole description of the fire and the persecution was biased by the attempt of the author to paint Nero as the blackest possible tyrant.³ The conclusion of Bacchus is based upon the supposition that the persecution began before the fire, and that so little was made of the charge of incendiarism that nobody paid any attention to it.⁴

Let us now turn to Tacitus. In the chapters⁵ just preceding the account of the persecution he describes the great fire of the year 64. In the first sentence he states explicitly that it is uncertain whether the fire was accidental or whether it was caused by the emperor, as his sources gave both accounts. He then proceeds with a detailed descrip-

¹ A. Profumo, *Le fonti ed i tempi dell' incendio Neroniano*, p. 267.

² Vide Allard in *Revue des ques. hist.*, vol. lxxx, 1906, pp 324 *et seq.*; D. Schoenaich, *Die neronische Christenverfolgung* (Breslau, 1911), p. 6.

³ E. Th. Klette, *Die Christenkatastrophe unter Nero* (Tübingen, 1907), p. 18. But *cf.*, Preuschen and Kruger, *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte* (Tübingen, 1911), vol. i, p. 64.

⁴ F. J. Bacchus, "The Neronian Persecution," in *Dublin Review*, 1908, pp. 287 *et seq.*

⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, xv, ch. xxxviii.

tion of the fire.¹ It began, he says, on the nineteenth of July in that part of the circus which adjoins the Palatine and Caelian hills, in the midst of shops containing inflammable wares. Fanned by the wind, the blaze soon covered the entire length of the circus. It first consumed the level portions of the city, then rose to the hills. To the confusion of the fire was added the distress of the people. The wailings of terror-stricken women, the feebleness of old age, and the helplessness of childhood, the crowding, and the delay in order to save others, all aggravated the general confusion. Those who escaped to a place apparently secure, soon found themselves again enveloped in flame. Many in utter despair perished though they might have escaped. No one dared to try to stop the mischief because of incessant threats of a number of persons who forbade the extinguishing of the flames. Others went around openly hurling fire-brands, and shouting that they were following orders in so doing, perhaps, however, in order to plunder more freely. Nero was at Antium and returned only just in time to see the palace destroyed. The Emperor did everything in his power to check the suffering of the people. But his acts failed to put down the rumor, that even while the city was in flames, he had appeared on a private stage and sang of the destruction of Troy. At the end of five days the fire was finally under control, but it broke out a second time, now running through the more spacious districts. It seemed as though Nero was aiming at the glory of founding a new city and calling it by his name. Of the fourteen districts of Rome, but four were left uninjured, three were leveled to the ground, the other seven were partially destroyed.

¹ For the great fire see also Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, lxii, 16-18; Pliny, *Natural History*, xvii, 1; Suetonius, *Nero*, ch. xxxviii, also mentioned in ch. xxxi and ch. xxxix.

Tacitus then briefly describes the rebuilding of the royal palace and of the city. The streets were broad and carefully laid out, the height of houses was restricted, porticoes were added, at Nero's expense, to protect the front of the tenements, and the method of building was to be improved.

"But," continues Tacitus, "the suspicion that the fire was the result of an order yielded neither to human effort, nor to the lavish gifts of the emperor, nor even to the propitiation of the gods.¹ Therefore to check this rumor Nero substituted as culprits and afflicted with the most exquisite tortures those who were called Christians by the mob and were hated for their enormities." His explanation is remarkably clear. His meaning is not only perfectly plain, but the picture which he has presented leaves such an impression that nearly all have accepted without question this account as the true explanation of the beginning of the persecution.

If Tacitus were the only source for the Neronian persecution we could stop here, accepting the account without serious misgivings. But there are other sources and it is a striking fact that not one of them connect in any way the fire with the persecution.² They not only do not mention the charge of incendiarism, but they fail to make the slightest reference to the fire, where such a reference would be most natural, and where their silence is a matter of too great significance to be ignored.

Consider, for example, the earliest source which has come down to us, namely, Clement of Rome. The sufferings of the Christians under Nero furnished him a well

¹ See N. Gwatkin, *Early Church History to 313 A. D.* (London, 1909), p. 77, who argues that Nero was not responsible for the fire. See also H. Schiller, *Geschichte der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Gotha, 1883), vol. i, p. 359.

² For a possible exception see the apocryphal letter of Seneca to Paul, *infra*, p. 56.

known and striking example upon which he could moralize in his letter to the Corinthians. This letter had been called forth by a serious quarrel in the Corinthian church. Envy and jealousy were at work. He proceeded to give examples from the Old Testament to warn his readers against the sin of envy. Envy, he said, led Cain to kill his brother, sent Jacob into exile, persecuted Joseph, compelled Moses to flee, and incited Saul against David. Then coming to his own time he gave as another example of the result of envy and jealousy the persecution of Nero.

Certainly in the mind of Clement who wrote many years before Tacitus the persecution was due to envy and jealousy. He emphasized the fact again and again; the apostles, the women, the great multitude, all suffered because of envy and strife. But to what envy does he refer? Was it possible that the Roman government was jealous of the Christians, and for this reason instituted a persecution? Such an explanation would be absurd, for the Christian community at that time was too insignificant to have aroused any envy—except from one quarter. Now it seems significant in this connection that the suffering of the apostles under Nero are spoken of by Clement as though continuous with those sufferings which had been caused by the Jews. The natural inference is that the Jews, because of their jealousy of the Christians, had stirred up the persecution directed against the Christians.¹ To be sure Clement takes for granted a knowledge of the circumstances which we do not possess. It is not impossible, of course, that the occasion for the exercise of this jealousy was the fire at Rome. Perhaps, as Allard² explains,

¹ *Vide* Bacchus, "Neronian Persecution," in *Dublin Review*, 1908, p. 349.

² P. Allard, *Histoire des persécutions pendant les deux premiers siècles*, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1903), pp. 42 *et seq.*

Nero in looking for a scapegoat upon whom he might divert suspicion, succeeded in turning the indignation of the populace against the Jews. The facts would have suited this purpose admirably, for the fire had begun in the shops of the great circus, occupied by oriental merchants, among whom were many Jews, but it had not reached the region of the Porta Capena where the Jews lived. But they had at court powerful protectors, especially Poppaea.¹ Allard proposes as a probable hypothesis that Poppaea, or some other Jewish servants in the palace, turned the attention of Nero to the Christians, still confused with the Jews by the masses, but really long pursued by them with a fierce hatred and irreconcilable jealousy.²

Suetonius, a contemporary of Tacitus, completed the *Lives of the Caesars* only three or four years after Tacitus wrote the *Annals*. He must have been familiar with the account of the persecution in the *Annals*, for in some passages of the *Lives* he has apparently used and followed the account of Tacitus. But Suetonius failed to give the slightest hint which would in any way indicate a connection between the fire and the suppression of the Christians; in fact, he separates by many chapters the accounts of the two events. According to Schoenaich³ the historical method of Suetonius accounts for this fact, inasmuch as he grouped his material by topic without regard to the mere external relation of cause and effect, and therefore often arbitrarily

¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, xv, 61. Vide Klette, *op. cit.*, pp. 25 *et seq.*

² So also Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, (ed. Bury, London, 1901), vol. ii, p. 88; E. Renan, *L'Antechrist*, in *Histoire des origines du christianisme* (Paris, 1873), vol. iv, pp. 153 *et seq.*; Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp* (London, 1889), vol. i, pp. 10 *et seq.* For a contrary opinion see A. Coen, "La Persecuzione Neroniana dei cristiani," in *Atene e Roma*, 1900, no. 23, p. 337; Linsenmayer, *Bekämpfung des Christenthums*, p. 55, note 1.

³ G. Schoenaich, *Die neronische Christenverfolgung*, p. 6.

rearranged his material.¹ But if this hypothesis is correct it only serves to emphasize the importance of the fact that he mentions the suppression of the Christians along with a number of other police regulations of a permanent nature.² Suetonius does not explain what called the attention of the police administrative officers to the Christians, but it seems most unlikely that he would have placed the notice of this suppression in a list of police measures if he had believed that the persecution had been caused by the charge of incendiarism. His statement implies rather that Nero maintained a more or less steady suppression of these undesirable citizens in order to preserve the good order of the city. Or, in other words, the account of Suetonius indicates that the Christians were suppressed for the same reason that the worshipers of Bacchus and Isis had been suppressed before them. They fell under the ordinary rule of Roman intolerance, and as a result, their suppression became the duty of the Roman officials.³

As in the case of Clement of Rome, innumerable attempts have been made to reconcile Suetonius and Tacitus. Ramsay, for example, maintains that Suetonius gives merely a brief statement of the permanent administrative principle into which Nero's action ultimately resolved itself. Tacitus, on the other hand, prefixes to his account of the same result a description of the origin and gradual development of Nero's action; and the picture which he draws is so impressive and so powerful as to concentrate attention,

¹ The account of the fire is given in ch. xxxviii, in connection with other tyrannical acts of the emperor.

² Contrast *Claudius*, 25, where Suetonius mentions the action taken against the Jews in 52 A. D. This, a single isolated act, is mentioned alongside of the taking of freedom from Lycia, where no lasting policy is implied. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 229 *et seq.*

³ *Vide*, pt. i, ch. i, p. 23.

and withdraw the mind of the reader from the final stage and the implied result of the Emperor's action.¹ Accordingly, he concludes, the persecution of Nero, begun for the sake of diverting popular attention, was continued as a permanent police measure under the form of a general persecution of the Christians as a sect dangerous to the public safety.² Hardy,³ in the same connection, says that the attempt to convict the Christians of burning the city failed; the people saw through it. Hence Suetonius does not think it worth while to disturb his summary of events by bringing the punishment of the Christians into connection, generally admitted to be fictitious, with the burning of the city. The charge of incendiarism, he adds, had developed into a general charge of disaffection to the government, resulting from a mischievous and morose superstition.

If it were not for the singular silence of every other writer on the charge of incendiarism we might accept some of these attempts at reconciliation, and admit that the contradictions are more apparent than real. Of course any argument based merely upon the silence of this or that writer is inconclusive at best, but when we look in vain for even the slightest mention of such a supposedly notorious fact as the charge of incendiarism, we are at least justified in questioning the accuracy of Tacitus. In view of the unreliability of our historical evidence in general, and of the large number of traditional beliefs that melt away under critical examination, it would be by no means surprising to find that Tacitus either deliberately connected unassociated events or else was himself laboring under a misconception.

¹ W. M. Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

² *Ibid.*, p. 241.

³ E. G. Hardy, *Christianity and the Roman Government*, 2nd ed., p. 55.

The apologist Melito of Sardis, writing a half-century later, says that Nero and Domitian were persuaded to persecute the Christians by certain malicious slanderers. By most writers this short quotation has received but little attention. Klette,¹ however, is inclined to lay considerable stress upon his explanation. It certainly agrees with the statements of Clement of Rome, and Klette's explanation that the calumniators were the Jews is a point well taken. He argues² that the slanderers in the first place must have been well acquainted with the distinction between Jews and Christians, and in the second place they must have hated the Christians with an unrelenting hatred. One does not have to go far to discover who these malicious advisers are likely to have been. Even in the court of Nero there were influential Jews or Jewish proselytes. The Jewish actor Aliturus was in special favor,³ but by far the most influential of all was the Jewish proselyte Poppaea Sabina, who by a series of crimes had become empress. Tacitus speaks of her along with Tigellinus as the emperor's most confidential adviser in times of rage.⁴ The malicious slanderers then would seem to have been none other than the Jewish advisers of Nero.

Tertullian, writing still thirty years later, says not a word about the cause of this persecution, except to suggest that it occurred *per Neronis saevitiam*,⁵ through the cruelty of Nero. The very silence of Tertullian on this point is remarkable, the more so because he was a Westerner, entirely familiar with western tradition. That the great apologist, who above all others labored to explode the calumnies

¹ Klette, *Die Christenkatastrophe unter Nero*, pp. 18, 24.

² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³ Josephus, *De vita sua*, ch. iii.

⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, xv, 61.

⁵ Tertullian, *Apology*, 21.

heaped upon the Christians, should have entirely neglected the opportunity offered by this charge of incendiarism, which even according to Tacitus had been completely disproved, is significant to say the least. Here was just the case he was looking for. The Christians had been falsely accused, they had been made to suffer for another's crime, so many innocent Christians had suffered to satisfy the tyrant's rage that even the hardened Roman populace became sorry for them. What an argument for the vindication of the oppressed Christians! Why did Tertullian neglect to use it? Since he was trying to show that the Christians had only been persecuted by the tyrants, why did he not make use of this act of tyranny? There seems to be but one explanation—there had never been any such a thing. It certainly seems that if Tacitus had been correct Tertullian would have known it, and if he had known these facts he most certainly would have mentioned them.

But Tertullian is by no means an isolated case. On the contrary, the charge of incendiarism is not mentioned in a single one of the apologies¹ which has come down to us. The apologists neither took any advantage of the false accusation, nor did they feel called upon to defend themselves against such a charge.² The reason is certainly not because they are afraid to raise the question, for there is also not the slightest mention of such a charge in any of the known pagan polemics.³ More than all this, of the half-dozen or

¹ P. Allard, "L'incendie de Rome," in *Rev. des ques. his.*, 1903, vol. lxxiii, pp. 367 et seq. Reprinted as *Les Chrétiens ont-ils incendié Rome sous Néron?* (Paris, 1904), p. 43.

² Schoenaich, however, believes that the silence of the apologists of the second century on this point has no particular significance, since they registered only those reproaches which were made against the Christians in their own time. *Die neronische Christenverfolgung*, p. 6.

³ For example Celsus, Lucian, Julian. See Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

so accounts of the fire by both pagan and Christian writers,¹ not one except Tacitus even hints at the implication of any religious sect, or of any persecution as a result.

The silence of Eusebius is particularly important because his history embodies a great number of early Christian writings which he used as sources for his *Church History* and for his *Chronicle*. To be sure he was not a Roman and he is not always reliable when it comes to western traditions, but it is at least reasonable to suppose that if the Christians had suffered as incendiaries he would have known the fact, and would have mentioned it either in the *Church History* or in the *Chronicle*. In the *Chronicle*,² under the ninth year of Nero, he says, "Conflagrations broke out in great numbers at Rome." Under the thirteenth year he gives the notice on the persecution which is translated and repeated by Jerome.³ He not only does not connect these events, then, but he separates them by a period of four years. Eusebius's statements in the *Church History*⁴ would seem to indicate that he was fairly well acquainted with the sources on Nero.

But if Eusebius, as a Greek, unfamiliar with western tradition, had committed such an error, surely Jerome, a western Christian, would correct it in his translation of the *Chronicle*. And so he does to a certain extent, for he found it necessary to correct and amplify the account of the fire.

¹ Suetonius, *Nero*, 31, 38, 39; Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, lxii, 16-18; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xvii, 1; Orosius, *History*, vii, 7; Sulpicus Severus, *Chronicon*, ii, 29 who practically transcribes the account of Tacitus.

² J. Karst, *Eusebius Werke, Die Chronik aus dem Armenischen übersetzt mit textkritischen Commentar* (Leipsig, 1911, G. C. S.), p. 215.

³ Quoted in pt. ii, ch. ii.

⁴ *Church History*, ii, 25, 2. Quoted in pt. ii, ch. ii.

Under the tenth year of Nero's reign he says,¹ "Nero, in order to witness a likeness of the burning of Troy, burned a great part of the city of Rome." Later, however, under the year 68, he speaks of the persecution,² making no allusion whatever to any connection between the two events. Jerome's statement can be taken as fairly representative of the accepted belief of the fourth century.

The *De Mortibus Persecutorum*³ says that Nero began the persecution when it was brought to his attention that Peter by his miracles was winning many converts to the new faith. When he realized that not only at Rome but everywhere a great multitude was condemning the old religion and joining the new, since he was an execrable and wicked tyrant, he tried to destroy the new religion. The author says nothing as to who the informers were; in fact his account is of little value as evidence. However, he too fails to connect in any way the fire and the persecution.

There are two possible exceptions to the general statement that Tacitus alone connects the fire and the persecution, namely, Sulpicius Severus and a fourth-century forger. The relation which exists between Sulpicius Severus and Tacitus is quite evident.⁴ In this particular chapter he has hardly more than transcribed word for word much of the account of Tacitus. In fact, Halm, in his edition of Tacitus, has used the account of Severus to correct the manuscript. This is not an exception then, since this account can have no more value than the account which he slavishly used.

¹ Hieronymi, *Eusebii Chronicorum Liber*, ii, Olymp., 210, Anno Christi, 64 (ed. Schoene), Nero ut similitudinem Troie ardentis inspiceret, plurimam partem Romanae urbis incendit.

² Quoted in pt. ii, ch. ii.

³ *De mortibus persecutorum*, ii, 5 et seq. Quoted in pt. ii, ch. ii.

⁴ J. Bernays, "Ueber die Chronik des Sulpicius Severus," in *Jahresberichte der judisch-theologischen Seminar*, Breslau, 1861.

On the other hand, if Lightfoot is correct in his supposition that the author of the apocryphal letter of Seneca to Paul¹ used some account of the Neronian fire and persecution which is no longer extant, we apparently have an exception to the general statement that only Tacitus connects the two events. Lightfoot gives as his reason for this theory the fact that the writer says that both the Jews and Christians suffered as incendiaries, and that a hundred and thirty-two houses and six insulae were burnt in six days. Since Tacitus is the only author who connects the fire and the persecution, and since this forger differs in these two points from Tacitus, he must, therefore, argues Lightfoot, have used some other source, now lost, which also said the Christians were persecuted as incendiaries. But this forger was familiar with Tacitus, for Fleury² has called attention to the fact that many expressions are borrowed from him. At best this evidence of a fourth-century forger as to the existence of some other source connecting the fire and the persecution is not likely to be of much value. So far as the small amount of damage is concerned Eusebius had a similar misconception. His statement that the Christians and Jews were wont to be punished as incendiaries is in all probability simply his own amplification of Tacitus' account, and it is by no means necessary to suppose that he followed some other source of which we know absolutely nothing. Undoubtedly these statements are simply examples of the errors of which the letters are full.

We are confronted then with the fact that Tacitus alone gives the fire as the cause of the persecution. Not only that, but every other available document on the persecution gives an explanation of the cause, which if not actually

¹ *Vide* pt. ii, ch. ii.

² Fleury, *Saint Paul et Sénèque* (Paris, 1853), vol. ii, pp. 281-282.

inconsistent with Tacitus, must be reconciled by most ingenious theories. It certainly would seem that the evidence against the reliability of Tacitus on this point is overwhelming, in spite of the fact that most modern authorities still accept his account. At any rate, the above discussion ought to be sufficient to raise a serious question about this old traditional theory, even though it is impossible to entirely dispel it. It at least should suffice to cause us to admit that in the last analysis we simply do not know.

On minor points Tacitus has been attacked time and again. Schiller,¹ for example, unable to understand how Christianity, which was developing under the toleration extended to the Jews, could have been singled out for special punishment, suggested that the persecution really fell upon the Jews.² Individual Christians, he admits, may have been involved, but Tacitus in specifying the Christians has committed an anachronism, and wrote as a contemporary of Trajan rather than as a historian of the period of Nero. In other words, according to Schiller, Tacitus made a distinction which was well known in his time, but which had not yet been made in the Neronian period. A statement in Suetonius³ would seem to indicate that they had been confused in the time of Claudius. But the evidence of the sources, particularly of Suetonius, Clement, and Melito, together with the silence of Josephus and Dio Cassius concerning any persecution of the Jews

¹ H. Schiller, *Geschichte des römischen Kaiserreichs unter der Regierung des Nero* (Berlin, 1872), pp. 584 *et seq.*; *Gesch. der röm. Kais.*, vol. ii, pp. 443-450. So also Gibbon, *op. cit.*, ch. xvi; Hausrath, *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte* (München, 1875), vol. iii, pp. 408 *et seq.* Vide Schoenaich, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

² Vide *Apocryphal Letter of Seneca to Paul*, *supra*.

³ Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25.

would seem to be conclusive that the persecution fell upon the Christians.¹

One of the stumbling-blocks in the interpretation of Tacitus, the one which has caused the greatest amount of dispute, is the phrase, *qui fatebantur*. Although most scholars² have interpreted it as a confession that they were Christians, it has been argued that *fatebantur* could not be used to refer to a religious confession; therefore it must mean that they confessed to the charge of incendiarism.³ Accordingly the Christians were punished as convicted incendiaries,⁴ and not because of their beliefs. In a work written later, to answer his critics, Schiller expresses the opinion that after a number of those accused of incendiarism was found guilty, the mere membership in the sect sufficed as a ground for condemnation, since from this membership they derived participation in the crime of incendiarism.⁵ Arnold⁶ goes one step further and holds that

¹ Arnold, *Die ner. Christenverfolgung*, pp. 30 et seq., p. 115; Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., p. 46; Linsenmayer, *Bekämpfung des Christenthums*, p. 58; Workman, *Pers. in the Early Ch.*, pp. 57-59; Klette, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

² Linsenmayer, *op. cit.*, p. 55; Weis, *Christenverfolgungen*, pp. 31 et seq.; K. Hofbauer, *Die erste Christenverfolgung* (Oberhollabrunn, 1903), pp. 17; et al.

³ H. Schiller, *Gesch. d. röm. Kais. unter Nero*, pp. 435 et seq.; *Gesch. der röm. Kais.*, vol. ii, pp. 445-450; Hausrath, *Neut. Zeit.*, vol. iii, p. 408.

⁴ So also Neumann, *Der röm. Staat und die all. Kirche*, p. 4.

⁵ H. Schiller, "Ein Problem der Tacituserklärung," in *Commentationes philologicae in honorem Th. Mommseni* (Berlin, 1877), pp. 41-47. So R. Pohlmann, "Nero," in *Real-encyklopädie f. Prot. Theol.*, 1903, vol. xiii, p. 718.

⁶ Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 20; vide J. Stiglmayr ("Tacitus über d. Brand v. Rom-Neuere Erklärungsversuche," in *Stimmen aus Maria Laach*, vol. lxxix, 1910, pp. 169-184), who holds that some were arrested from whom a confession was drawn which would suffice for accusing the *ingens multitudo* of Christians. He cites Tacitus, *Annals*, xiv. 60, for a parallel case.

the Christians, either under torture or else because as Millenarians they were actually guilty, confessed to the charge of incendiarism. But he distinguishes a second phase in which they were tried for hatred of mankind, *odium generis humani*.

It remained for Paschal, however, to carry this train of thought to its limit. He goes so far as to denounce the Christians, or at least some of them, as the true authors of the fire.¹ From the last passage in the chapter he concludes that it was the Christians who had executed the orders of Nero.² According to Paschal the Christians were a class of people animated with base envy, slaves full of resentment, wretches eager for vengeance and pillage, and profligates freed from all check human or divine.³ This attack called forth such a storm of criticism as one might expect if he had struck at the very foundation of the Church itself.⁴ It is sufficient to remark that his thesis has been overwhelmingly disproved.

The discussion in the previous chapter on the legal basis of the persecutions, bears very directly upon this suppression of the Christians. As was there suggested, there is no proof that Nero issued an edict forbidding Christianity to

¹ C. Pascal, *l'Incendio di Roma e i primi christiani* (Milan, 1900); 4th ed. in *Fatti e leggende di Roma antica* (Florence, 1903); also an answer to his many critics in "Di un nuovo fonti per l'incendio Neroniano," in *Atene e Roma*, 1901, no. 27, pp. 380 et seq.

² *Atene e Roma*, 1901, loc. cit.

³ Pascal, *Fatti e leggende*, pp. 136, 145.

⁴ For a list of the first answers vide Profumo in *Nuovo Bullettino di archeologia cristiana*, 1900, pp. 344-352; supplemented in Klette, *op. cit.*, p. 11. The more important are,—P. Semeria, *Il primo sangue cristiano* (Rome, 1901, 2nd ed., 1907); G. Boissier, "L'incendie de Rome et la première persécution chrétienne," in *Journal des Savants*, 1902, pp. 158-169. P. Allard, "L'incendie de Rome et les premiers chrétiens," in *Revue des ques. hist.*, vol. lxxiii, 1903, reprinted as *Les Chrétiens ont-ils incendié Rome sous Néron?* (Paris. 1904).

exist. The only source for such a statement is Sulpicius Severus,¹ who wrote nearly three and a half centuries after the persecution. He appends an account of the edict to his description of the persecution, which, as we have seen above, is practically a literal rendering of Tacitus. As Tacitus himself says nothing about such a law, we are forced to conclude that Sulpicius is referring to the action of later emperors, or else that his statement on this point is unreliable.²

Under what procedure, therefore, did the Neronian persecution take place? It was not under the existing criminal laws, for immorality, atheism, and *majestas*,³ nor at this early date because of their membership in a *collegium illicitum*.⁴ The truth of the situation is rather implied in the short statement of Suetonius,⁵ which intimates that the Christians were suppressed as a police measure, perhaps because of supposed immorality, at least because for one reason or another they fell under the rule of intolerance. Their trial in the first instance probably came before the *praefectus urbi*, as the chief police magistrate at Rome, or before other executive magistrates at Rome in whom was vested the power of *coercitio*.

By the Romans the Christians were probably regarded as magicians, since the Christians openly boasted of their power over demons and impure spirits. But that this persecution consisted of condemnations on the specific charge of magic is out of the question, though undoubtedly their magical practices would constitute an element in the hatred

¹ Sul. Severus, *Chronicon*, ii, 29.

² So Ramsay, *Church in the Rom. Emp.*, p. 244.

³ Profumo, *op. cit.*, p. 227; *vide* pt. i, ch. i.

⁴ Wieseler, *Die Christenverfolgungen der Caesaren* (Gütersloh, 1878), p. 11; Linsenmayer, *op. cit.*, p. 58; Semeria, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-63.

⁵ Suetonius, *Nero*, 16.

of the Romans for the members of the sect. Perhaps Suetonius had something of this sort in mind when he spoke of the Christians as a class of people of a superstition *novae ac maleficae*. The word *maleficae* may mean magical, and it is perhaps in this sense that Suetonius used it. It is possible also that Tacitus¹ implied something of the sort when he says that the Christians, who were adherents of an *exitabilis superstitio*, were hated for their *flagitia*, and were really punished for *odium generis humani*. The *flagitia* refer especially to the secret crimes and impure orgies which were imputed to the Christian sect, but the hatred for mankind might mean among other things the practice of magic.² At any rate the mode of punishment described by Tacitus is the same as that which was prescribed for magic, that is, by being thrown to the beasts, or by being crucified or burned alive.³

Suetonius says nothing about the details of the punishment, but Clement states that the Christians endured many outrages and torments, and that the women suffered cruel

¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, xv, 44.

² Ramsay, *op. cit.*, pp. 336, 342; Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., p. 53; Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 65. Cf., Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church*, pp. 53 *et seq.* *Vide Justinian Code*, ix, tit. 18, 7 (ed. P. Krüger, Berlin, 1906), which refers to law of Constantine. *Etsi homines magi, in quacumque sint parte terrarum, humani generis inimici credendi sunt.*

³ Paulus, *Sententiae* (ed. P. Krüger, Berlin, 1878), v, 23, 17, quotes the following law in the early third century. *Magicae artis conscios summo supplicio adfici placuit, id est bestiis obici aut cruci suffigi. Ipsi autem magi vivi exuruntur.* *Vide Mommsen, Römische Strafrecht*, pp. 639-643. *Vide also Seneca, Epistles* (ed. Haase, 1876, T. S.), ii, 2 (14) and x, 2 (78), who describes a similar punishment. In the second letter he pictures a steadfastness which might well refer to the Christians. It is by no means impossible that Seneca, who wrote these letters shortly before his death in 65 A. D., had the Christians in mind.

and unholy tortures as Danaids and Dircae.¹ Lightfoot² questions the text here, but if correct, he says it must refer to those refinements of cruelty, practiced by Nero and Domitian, which combined theatrical representations with judicial punishments, so that the offender suffered in the character of some hero of ancient legend or history. The story of Dirce, tied by the hair and dragged along by a bull, would be very appropriate for this treatment; but all attempts to make anything of the legend of the Danaids entirely fail. Arnold³ suggests that additions were made to the original legend for the purposes of the amphitheater; just as Orpheus was torn to pieces by a bear without any mythological justification.

A question which is very closely connected with the issuance of an edict by Nero is that of the universality of the persecution. If an edict was issued by Nero it follows that the persecution was general throughout the provinces. Accordingly those writers who have supported the theory of an edict also support the theory that the persecution extended to the rest of the empire and continued for many years, even up to the end of the reign of Nero.⁴ Callewaert⁵ distinguishes two phases of the persecution. The first, in connection with the charge of incendiarism was local and of short duration; ⁶ the second, followed the first

¹ Clement, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, ch. vi.

² J. Lightfoot, *St. Clement of Rome*, vol. ii, p. 32, note 5.

³ Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 38. *Vide* also Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

⁴ Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, vol. i, p. 60; De Rossi, in *Bullettino di archeologia cristiana*, 1865, p. 93; B. Aube, *Histoire des persécutions de l'Église* (Paris, 1875), p. 109; E. Renan, *l'Antechrist*, pp. 39, 45, 183.

⁵ C. Callewaert, "Les premiers chrétiens furent-ils persécutés par édits généraux ou par mesures de police?" in *Revue d'histoire eccl.*, vol. iii, 1902, pp. 347, 602.

⁶ See also L. Guérin, "Etude sur le fondement juridique des persécutions," in *Nouvelle Rev. hist. de droit français et étranger*, 1895, p. 632.

after an interval difficult to determine, but probably very short. It was rather a systematic repression having a permanent and legal character. It was, he says, the second phase which Suetonius had in mind,¹ and which was acute particularly in Asia Minor.²

Most scholars, however, have maintained that the so-called persecution was simply an act of violence, limited to the city of Rome and short in duration.³ This is certainly the only view that can be sustained by the evidence of the sources. The only authority for a general persecution is the totally unreliable Orosius,⁴ who wrote three and a half centuries afterward. However, it is by no means improbable that there were isolated cases of martyrdom outside of Rome,⁵ in which cases the provincial authorities would have been following the precedent set at Rome. It must be remembered, however, that at the time of Nero Christianity was by no means widespread, except in Asia Minor.⁶

First Peter may indicate the danger of such trials in Asia Minor, though the evidence of this epistle is of a very uncertain nature and probably applies to a period a decade or two later.⁶ This letter was directed to the faithful in Pontus, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.⁷ The writer urges

¹ *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, loc. cit., p. 348.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 604 et seq.

³ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. xvi; F. Görres, "Christenverfolgung," in Kraus, *Real-encyklopädie der christlichen Alterthümer*, vol. i, 1882, p. 221; Keim, *Rom und das Christentum* (Berlin, 1881), pp. 193 et seq.; Schiller, *Ein Prob. des Tacituserklar.*, p. 47; Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 115; Klette, *op. cit.*, p. 30; Preuschen and Kruger, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 64, etc.

⁴ Orosius, *History*, vii, 7. Cf., Clement, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, vi, where Clement refers to the martyrdoms as taking place among us, probably referring to the community at Rome.

⁵ Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 244; Linsenmayer, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

⁶ *Vide infra*, pt. ii, ch. ii.

⁷ *First Peter*, i, 1.

them to submit to the authority of the government,¹ and encourages them in the face of threatened persecution.² But to say that it was written by Peter at Rome to the Christians of Asia Minor, after some Christians had been punished in the capital, in order to warn his co-worshippers of similar dangers,³ or even to say that it refers in any way to the episode at Rome, is mere hypothesis. It is more likely that it refers to those persecutions in Asia Minor to which the Christians had always been more or less subject.

Attempts have been made, but without success, to prove that there were martyrs in the West outside of Rome. Allard's ⁴ hypothesis that there may have been martyrs in the south of Gaul is based upon no authority whatever.⁵ Nor is there any better basis for the traditions of martyrdoms in many of the towns of Italy.⁶ The *acta* which recount the martyrdom of Gervasius and Protasius in Milan and Vitalio in Ravenna and of others are worthy of no credence whatever.⁷ Certain inscriptions ⁸ discovered at Pompeii seem to indicate not only the presence of Christians there

¹ *First Peter*, ii, 13-15.

² *Ibid.*, iv, 12-15; v, 8-9; *vide* pt. ii, ch. ii.

³ So Linsenmayer, *op. cit.*, p. 59; Allard (*Hist. des pers.*, p. 69) and Callewaert (in *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, vol. iii, *loc. cit.*, pp. 606, 613) see in this document further evidence that Nero issued an edict; in fact they believe that the letter was written just after the issuance of the edict had generalized the danger.

⁴ Allard, *Hist. des Pers.*, pp. 71 *et seq.*

⁵ The inscription published by Gruter, 289, 9 is manifestly a forgery. See also Orelli, 730, and *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, ii, 25.

⁶ See Tillemont, *Memoires*, ii, article and note on the Pers. of Nero and upon S. Gervais and S. Protas, S. Nazaire and S. Celse.

⁷ Linsenmayer, *op. cit.*, p. 60. *Vide* Hergenröther-Kirsch, *Handbuch der allgemeine Kirchengeschichte* (Freiburg, 1902), vol. i, p. 113.

⁸ *C. I. L.*, iv, 813; pl. xvi, no. 3; *Bul. d. arch. crist.*, 1864, p. 71.

before 79 A. D., but also the fact that they were the object of ridicule and insult. But to suppose that there were martyrs in Pompeii at the time of Nero is simply a guess.¹

If we reject the arson hypothesis we at once raise the question of the date of this suppression of the Christians. Bacchus, arguing that *qui fatebantur* was used by Tacitus to indicate that the Christians avowed themselves members of a sect already being hunted down by the government, dates the beginning of the persecution some time before 64 A. D.² We have the isolated evidence of one inscription pointing apparently to the case of a Roman woman of noble birth suffering for her belief in Christianity as early as 57 A. D.³ Nero left Rome in 66 A. D., so it is not likely that the suppression began later than this date, though the later church tradition placed it in 67 or 68 A. D.⁴ Probably the repression as a police measure, continued to some extent throughout the latter part of the reign of Nero, and there may have been cases even in the early Flavian period. If the widely-extended tradition of the martyrdom of Paul and even Peter in 66 or 67 A. D. can be accepted, we would have examples of trials even after Nero's departure.⁵ However, if there was any such an active suppression as

¹ Allard (*Hist. des Pers.*, p. 76) followed De Rossi and says that there were probably victims if there were Christians there at the time. The Jews, he says, who possessed a synagogue there, would probably point out the Christians to the angry pagans.

² Bacchus in *Dublin Review*, 1908, pp. 353 *et seq.*

³ Tacitus, *Annals*, xiii, 32. The surmise that she was a Christian has been rendered more probable by the archeological discovery. *Vide* De Rossi, *La Rome sotterranea cristiana* (Rome, 1864), vol. i, pp. 306 *et seq.*; Lightfoot, *S. Clement of Rome*, vol. i, pp. 30-32; but *cf.* Schiller, *Gesch. d. röm. Kais.*, vol. i, p. 446.

⁴ Eusebius, *Chronicon* (ed. Karst), Olymp, 211, ann. Ner. 13; Jerome's version (ed. Schoene) ann. Ner. 14.

⁵ *Vide* Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

Tacitus describes, it could have lasted only a very short time.¹

The *ingens multitudo* of Tacitus and the πολλὸν πλῆθος of Clement would at first thought seem to indicate not only that the persecution extended for quite a long period, but also that there was a comparatively large number of victims. But it is rather difficult to accept the statement of Tacitus that there were sufficient victims to rouse a feeling of pity among a populace which, as he says, hated the Christians as criminals worthy of death and which found its amusement in just such scenes as Tacitus describes. Schiller,² who minimizes the whole occurrence, treats the statement as absolutely incredible. Even the great multitude of Clement would mean a small number comparatively, for the Christian community at Rome could have been only an insignificant part of the population,³ and what to him would seem a great multitude would in reality be a very small number. The *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*,⁴ which gives 974 or 979 martyrs for the Peter-Paul day, June 29th, is too late and too unauthoritative to shed any light whatever on the question.⁵ When we make the necessary allowances for exaggeration on the part of Tacitus and Clement the actual number of those who suffered death becomes relatively small.

But whatever the number of martyrs, none of their names have come down to us with the exception of two. There is a very old and a very strong tradition that both

¹ Linsenmayer, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

² Schiller, *Gesch. des Kais. unter Nero*, p. 437.

³ Allard ("L'incendie de Rome," in *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1903, vol. lxxiii, p. 359) calls attention to the fact that it must have been an almost imperceptible minority in the population of Rome.

⁴ Ed. De Rossi-Duchesne, in *Acta Sanctorum*, November, vol. ii, p. 84.

⁵ Klette, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

Paul and Peter were at Rome and that they suffered martyrdom under Nero. That Paul was martyred at Rome is pretty generally admitted, but even Peter's presence there has been most vigorously denied by some Protestant scholars.¹ However, Clement implies that both martyrdoms took place at Rome during the persecution of Nero,² and this in turn is corroborated by the evidence of Caius and of Dionysius of Corinth,³ though their evidence is late. Origen⁴ is the first to mention the fact that Peter was crucified head downward, while Tertullian⁵ states that Paul was beheaded.⁶ The tradition that Peter was crucified at Rome and that Paul was beheaded there was so well established by the time of Eusebius that it is unnecessary to mention any later sources. There are still other probable references to the martyrdom of Peter which are practically contemporaneous but which do not give any hint as to the

¹ Especially Lipsius, *Die Quellen der römischen Petrus-Sage* (Kiel, 1872); summarized by Jackson in *Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review*, 1876, pp. 265 *et seq.* Other authorities for his presence there besides those quoted are,—*First Peter*, v, 13 where Babylon probably means Rome, *Acts*, xii, 17, where many see a reference to Peter's departure for Rome, and Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, ii, xiv, 6 and *Chron.*, ad Olymp., 204, ann. Caii, 3.

² Clement, *Ep. ad Corinth*, v, quoted in pt. ii, ch. ii. *Vide* also Ignatius (*ad Romanos*, iv), who significantly joins the names of the two apostles in his letter to the Romans, and Irenaeus (*Contra Haereses*, iii, 1, 1) who speaks of the two preaching together at Rome. Renan (*l'Antechrist*, p. 556) and Sebatier (*Encyclopédie des sciences religieuses*, vol. x, p. 617) see an allusion to their martyrdom in *Revelations*, xviii, 20. Rejoice over her (Rome) thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her.

³ Both quoted in Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, ii, 25; *vide* pt. ii, ch. ii.

⁴ *Vide* pt. ii, ch. ii, quoted in Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iii, 1.

⁵ Tertullian, *Scorpiace*, xv; *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 36; *vide* pt. ii, ch. ii.

⁶ This was the penalty reserved for citizens. *Vide* Paulus, *Sent.*, v, xxix, 1.

place. The fourth gospel, which was written after his death, seems to refer to his martyrdom and to imply crucifixion as the manner of death.¹ Another reference is to be found in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, which probably belongs to the late first century, and which speaks of the martyrdom of one of the Apostles.² This *one* must be Peter, since Paul was not included as one of the Apostles till a half-century later.

According to a widespread tradition³ the martyrdom of Peter and Paul took place on the same day, June 29th, of the year 67. Prudentius, at the end of the fourth century, represented them as suffering one year apart.⁴ As a matter of fact the date simply cannot be determined, but if one accepts the martyrdom of both at Rome, 67 A. D., seems as likely as any.⁵ The tradition that they perished on the same day is late and very far from conclusive.

The conclusions to be drawn from this chapter are already obvious. In the first place that part of Tacitus which connects the persecution with the fire should be discarded. It is irreconcilable with the accounts in the other sources, as well as with the implications in the rest of the evidence

¹ *John*, xxi, 18-19. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. Now this he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God.

² Harnack (*Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1900, p. 984) withdraws his first attack on the theory that Peter is here referred to. *Vide* pt. ii, ch. ii.

³ Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, ii, 25, 8; *Chron.*, Olymp., 211; Hieronymus, *De viris illustribus*, ch. i. and ch. v.

⁴ Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, xii, 5. P. Gams, *Das Jahr des Martyrertodes* (Regensburg), 1867) assigns 65 for Peter and 67 for Paul; L. Duchesne, Dufourq. and Hausrath accept 64 as the date. Allard prefers 67 or 68.

⁵ Linsenmayer, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

obtainable on the whole Neronian period. Tacitus has either misrepresented the situation or else he was himself mistaken. The true cause of the persecution seems rather to be the "envy" mentioned by Clement and the influence of malicious slanderers as given by Melito; at least some jealousy or dissension, probably with the Jews, because of which the Jews, working through Poppaea or some other of the Jewish religion powerful at court, called the attention of the Roman authorities to the Christian religion. This led to the police measures which Suetonius mentions. It does not follow that the whole chapter of Tacitus must be thrown out. On the contrary, it is a valuable source, but it must be used only with the most extreme care.

There is no question but that the repression fell upon the Christians and not upon the Jews. That the two were clearly distinguished by the authorities when the repression began, or at least very soon after is very probable.

The Christians were not persecuted in virtue of an edict issued by Nero, nor under existing laws, but were repressed by the police magistrates in virtue of the power of *coercitio*.

The persecution was by no means universal, though there may have been isolated cases tried by the police authorities outside of Rome, following the precedents set at Rome. Such cases may have occurred in Asia Minor where the Christians were most numerous and most disliked.

Vigorous repression could have lasted only for a short time, though there were probably cases of martyrdom until late in the reign of Nero or even in the reigns of the early Flavians. It is difficult to determine when the first repression took place; it was probably during the last few years of Nero's reign.

The total number of martyrs was small, perhaps as a conjecture a score or two. The names of but two of these martyrs have come down to us, Paul and Peter. The most satisfactory date for their martyrdom seems to be 67 A. D.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIANS UNDER THE FLAVIAN EMPERORS

MUCH has been written on the policy of the Flavians towards the Christians, but few agree as to what that policy was. (So far as Vespasian is concerned, however, it seems fairly clear that he troubled himself very little about the Christians, and that they were at peace. Only a few fragments by the way of sources have come down to us. Melito¹ definitely mentions Nero and Domitian as the only persecutors, whereas Tertullian² names Vespasian as one who did not enforce the laws against the Christians.) Dio³ tells us that he rescinded the disfranchisement of such persons as had been condemned for impiety (*ασέβεια*) by Nero and succeeding rulers, and that he stopped the indictments made upon such complaints; all of which may or may not have any bearing upon the Christians.⁴ Eusebius,⁵ too, states that he had undertaken nothing prejudicial to the Christians. The only mention of Vespasian as a persecutor is that of Hilary of Poitiers,⁶ who, writing in the latter half of the fourth century, probably confused the Christian tradition and named him instead of his son Domitian.

Lightfoot⁷ prefers to believe that his statement was

¹ In Eusebius, *Church History*, iv, 29, 9, quoted in pt. ii, ch. ii.

² Tertullian, *Apology*, v. *Vide* pt. ii, ch. iv.

³ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, lxvi, 9, 1.

⁴ *Vide* pt. i, ch. i.

⁵ Eusebius, *op. cit.*, iii, 17, 5.

⁶ *Against the Arians*, 3, quoted in pt. ii, ch. iii.

⁷ Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp* (London, 1889), vol. i, p. 15 *et seq.*

based upon some facts known to him, but since obliterated from the permanent records of history. De Rossi,¹ on the other hand, takes quite the opposite view when he concludes from the archeological evidence that after the death of Nero and the condemnation of his memory the Christians certainly enjoyed a profound peace for more than thirty years. The inscriptions and the cemeteries, he says, indicate a period when the Christians did not fear to make open profession of their worship.² The entrances to the cemeteries were not hidden; they even sometimes showed monumental façades,³ and paintings representing biblical subjects were placed near the entrance, exposed to the light of day.⁴ At any rate, there are no traces of martyrdoms under Vespasian, though of course there may have been isolated cases, any record of which has failed to reach us.⁵

As for the attitude of Titus we are even less well informed than we are concerning that of Vespasian. The only evidence bearing on this question is contained in the chronicle of Sulpicius Severus, written at the beginning of the fifth century.⁶ Bernays⁷ has suggested that Sulpicius used for his description of the destruction of Jerusalem a part of the history of Tacitus now lost. This particular selection, however, is too characteristic

¹ *Bullettino d. archeologia cristiana*, 1865, p. 95. Vide Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 84.

² See Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 90 *et seq.*, for an excellent summary of the archeological evidence.

³ De Rossi, *Roma Sotterranea*, vol. i, p. 185 *et seq.*

⁴ De Rossi, in *Bul. d. arch. crist.*, 1865, p. 94.

⁵ Linsenmayer, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-70; Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicon*, ii, 30, 5, quoted in pt. ii, ch. iii.

⁷ J. Bernays, "Über die Chron. Sul. Sev.," in *Jahr. der jud.-theol. Sem.*, Breslau, 1861, p. 55. Also vide Mommsen, *Provinces of the Roman Empire*, vol. ii, p. 236.

of a Christian writer to be a part of that taken from Tacitus. As Linsenmayer¹ suggests, we have here an independent expression of the Christian author. The improbability of Titus maintaining before Jerusalem that Christianity ought to be destroyed, and of that fact being recorded in a pagan writer is indeed very great.² So far as our evidence goes, then, there is no reason for differentiating between the status of the Christians under Vespasian and their status under Titus.

The question of the policy of the early Flavians is simplified if one remembers that they inherited the policy of Nero. Upon the determination of the legal status of the Christians under Nero depends the interpretation of the Flavian policy. If, then, the conclusion reached in the chapter on the Neronian persecution is correct, namely, that their repression was largely a matter of police administration, then their status under the Flavians becomes clear. If there were disturbances, or if the Christians aroused the hostility of the populace, or if for any other reason they came under the ordinary rule of intolerance, then the police authorities may have acted; otherwise the Christians likely were left in peace. Whether or not there were such actions of the police we simply do not know. Our records fail entirely to answer that question.

A careful study of the sources on the period of Domitian reveals at once the slender foundation upon which is built the tradition of the second persecution of the church. Clement of Rome, the only contemporary

¹ Linsenmayer, *op. cit.*, p. 72, note 2.

² Contra Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 254, who holds that this speech, probably composed by Tacitus, would embody the historian's mature conception of the nature of the Flavian policy toward the Christians, as shown in the whole course of their rule.

source, says nothing about such a repression. He drops one or two incidental remarks which may or may not refer to what is properly called a persecution. He speaks of the unexpected calamities and disasters which had befallen the church at Rome one after another.¹ Later he says,² referring to the time of Nero: "For we are in the same arena, and the same conflict is imposed upon us." In the first place we are not entirely sure of the date of this letter, for it must be remembered that these very selections have been largely responsible for placing the date at 95, so as to coincide with the persecution of Domitian. In the second place this reference is too indefinite to prove very much by itself. The question arises whether or not there are other reliable sources to fix its meaning.

One or two vague notes in the epistles of Ignatius may refer to some such oppression in Asia Minor, but they are of a very doubtful character indeed.³ The two letters were written from Smyrna while he was on his way to Rome where he suffered martyrdom during the reign of Trajan. They refer to some form of oppression in Asia Minor which had taken place before the time of writing.

Suetonius⁴ wrote twenty-five years after the date set for the persecution. He refers to the collection of the Jewish poll-tax and to the death of Flavius Clemens, but in connections which in no way suggest a persecution of the Christians.⁵

¹ Clement, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, i, 1. See pt. ii, ch. iii.

² *Ibid.*, vii, quoted in pt. ii, ch. ii.

³ Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp* (London, 1889), vol. ii, p. 124, p. 211, To the Magnesians, viii, To the Romans, v. Quoted in pt. ii, ch. iii.

⁴ Suetonius, *Domitian*, xii, xv.

⁵ *Vide* pt. ii, ch. iii.

The first actual mention of a persecution appears in the Christian apologists, Melito and Tertullian.¹ Just how much authority they had for fastening, upon one of the worst of emperors and naming him along with Nero as a persecutor can not, of course, be determined. The fact that these apologists, were endeavoring to show that the Christians had been persecuted by the bad emperors and protected by the good must certainly be taken into consideration. It is significant, too, that Melito wrote some eighty years after the date set for the persecution, and Tertullian still twenty-five years later, at a time when the state had assumed an entirely different attitude towards the Christians.

Melito says simply that Nero and Domitian alone have wished to falsely accuse our doctrine; Tertullian goes a little further and names Domitian along with Nero as a persecutor. The apologists may have used sources which have not survived, but so far as we know their only grounds for this statement was the fact that a few who may have happened to be Christians suffered along with others as the victims of Domitian's tyranny. But did they suffer as Christians? So far as Flavius Clemens is concerned Suetonius would seem to answer that question in the negative.

Turning to the only pagan source of importance, we have an epitome of Dio Cassius, made by an eleventh century Christian monk. Dio, who in turn wrote about one hundred and twenty-five years after the period under consideration, says that Flavius Clemens and Flavia Domitilla were both charged with atheism, under which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned.² Some of these, he says, were killed, and the remainder were at least deprived of their property. Dio

¹ *Vide* pt. ii, ch. ii.

² Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, lxxvii, 14, 1, 2.

never once mentions Christianity or anything like a persecution, but it is likely that he had the Christians in mind, for in his time they were called atheists by the populace though atheism¹ never constituted a crime at Roman law.

Dio's account, however, must be set over against the statement of Suetonius, who wrote a full century earlier. The latter, who was in a position to be much better informed than Dio, describes almost the same circumstances, but from an entirely different point of view, and incidentally leaves an entirely different impression. Those living according to Jewish customs were not persecuted for atheism or Jewish living. On the contrary, the emperor, to restore a depleted treasury, levied the Jewish poll-tax with great severity, and those who lived according to Jewish customs were compelled to pay. Flavius Clemens, according to Suetonius, was not brought up in connection with Jewish living at all, but was put to death by the emperor for purely political reasons.

However, those Christians who were brought before the tribunal in connection with the levying of the poll-tax would naturally deny their connection with Judaism. If so they might have been regarded by the public as atheists, though, so far as we know, this term was not applied to the Christians until more than half a century after the time of Domitian.² Inasmuch as their worship

¹ Aube (*Hist. des pers.*, p. 163 *et seq.*) and Wieseler (in *Jahrbuch für deutsche Theologie*, vol. xxii, p. 397) assume that ἀθεότης means *majestas*. Schiller (*Gesch. der Röm. Kais.*, vol. i, p. 573) considers that it is used indifferently with ἀσεβεία as a translation of *impietas*. *Vide* Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

² For the contrary view *vide* Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 108 *et seq.*, who cites the authorities that used this term in connection with the Christians.

had never been made a *religio licita*, and accordingly, since they would have had no claim to protection or even toleration on the part of the state, it is possible that some of them may have been persecuted by the police authorities. Perhaps Dio had something of this sort in mind when he referred to the charge of *atheism*, *under which many who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned*.

But even if we grant that the two accounts are not inconsistent on this point, and if we accept the statement of Dio that both Flavius Clemens and Domitilla were charged with atheism, still this evidence is by no means sufficient to support the tradition of a second great persecution of the church. He mentions but two martyrs, one of whom was banished, the other put to death. *Some* others were killed, and still others were at least deprived of their property. But such occurrences were common at Rome, and would by no means receive the special comment that they would receive to-day. Moreover it must be remembered that we are not sure that Dio had the Christians in mind at all.¹

Once the statement was made definite by Tertullian that Domitian persecuted the Christians, the tradition very easily became perpetuated. The Christian fathers from this time on repeated the story over and over, adding details and making the account more vivid. Lactantius,² writing two centuries and a quarter afterward, adds nothing to our information, but the account of his contemporary Eusebius is more significant. In the chronicle³ Eusebius quotes an unknown writer Brutius who says that many Christians suffered martyrdom

¹ Schiller, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 537.

² Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum*, iii.

³ Eusebius, *Chronicon*, ad Olymp., 218.

under Domitian. But both in the chronicle and in the history¹ Eusebius follows with an anticlimax, for he can mention nothing more glaring than the banishment of John and Domitilla, the trial of the descendants of Jude,² and the stopping of the persecution. His authorities must have been meagre indeed to permit of no greater elucidation.

The value of the evidence of Bruttius depends upon his identity and the date of writing. Unfortunately we have no evidence on either of these points. It is an open question whether he was or was not a Christian, though this passage would seem to mark him as such. Lightfoot³ argues from the quotations in Malalas⁴ that he was a Christian. It has been suggested on the other hand that Eusebius had him in mind when he says that even those writers who were far from our religion did not hesitate to mention in their histories the persecution and the martyrdoms which took place under it.⁵ It is more likely that Eusebius had Dio in mind for he follows his account, except in minor details. The real criterion for determining the value of the evidence of Bruttius is the data of composition, but only wide limits can be determined. The Bruttian family, with which the author

¹ Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iii, 17, 18, 20.

² This legend shows that the Christians, according to Eusebius, were not persecuted systematically. The descendants of Jude haughtily confessed their Christianity, but had committed no political offence, hence were freed. *Vide* S. Gsell, *Essai sur le règne de l'empereur Domitien* (Paris, 1894), p. 313.

³ Lightfoot, *S. Clement of Rome*, vol. i, p. 48.

⁴ Joannes Malalas, *Chronographia* (ed. Dindorf, Bonn, 1831), x, p. 262, p. 34, p. 193. Malalas calls him Βόττιος, Βόττιος, Βούττιος.

⁵ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 113. Allard (p. 113, note 1) gives the authorities for and against the Christianity of Bruttius. Lightfoot (*op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 48) suggests that Eusebius quoted him at second hand, probably from Julius Africanus, A. D. 221, hence the error.

was perhaps connected held an important place in the state at the time of the Antonines, 138-180 A. D. Allard thinks it probable that he was Bruttius Praesens, the friend of Pliny the Younger.¹ De Rossi has found the tombs of some of the members of the family bordering upon the cemetery of Domitilla,² and Allard accordingly concludes that the writer, Bruttius Praesens, without doubt knew the niece of Clement and that what he records of her has authoritative value. This is, of course, a very interesting hypothesis, but it fails to convince. As Lightfoot³ remarks, after naming a number of the Bruttian family down to C. Bruttius Praesens, A. D. 246, the last who holds a place in the consular lists, the chronographer might have been any of the persons already named, or he might have been an entirely different person, perhaps some freedman or descendant of a freedman attached to the house. It is likely then that Bruttius was no better or earlier a source than Melito or Tertullian, in fact was probably an obscure Christian writer of the late second or the third century.

The meagre amount of material that has come down to us does not support the tradition⁴ of a great persecution under Domitian. The principal facts at all supported by the evidence are the following. First, the Christians at Rome at the time of Clement met with unexpected calamities and disasters and seem to have been in a position somewhat similiar to that of their predecessors under Nero. Secondly, one at least who may possibly have been a Christian was put to death by Domitian, probably because he was suspicious of his designs upon him and his power, possibly because of

¹ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

² *Bul. d. arch. crist.*, 1865, p. 24.

³ Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁴ See, for example, Orosius, *History*, vii, 10, quoted in pt. ii, ch. iii.

“Jewish living.” In the third place, two others, John and Domitilla appear to have been banished. Finally, there is doubtful evidence for the fact that others suffered martyrdom and still others were exiled. This falls a long way short of the picture of the bloody persecution which is ordinarily believed to have taken place in the reign of the tyrant Domitian.

What seems most likely to have occurred at this time was a more stringent administration on the part of those in authority. The status of the Christians would depend very largely upon the attitude not only of the emperor but of the provincial governors as well. If they were hostile they could make it extremely unpleasant for the Christians. Domitian's exaction of the poll-tax, his revival of the old national worship,¹ and his general tyranny would all indicate that he was just the one to encourage such an administration as would result in an increased number of cases being brought before the tribunal.

The name of Flavius Clemens has always been associated with the persecution of Domitian, as that of one of his most distinguished victims. Reference was made above² to the conflicting statements of Suetonius and Dio. The former calls him a man of most contemptible indolence, but indicates that he was put to death by Domitian as a precaution to prevent his own assassination. According to Suetonius,³ Domitian was living in constant dread and was taking every possible precaution to safeguard his life. Dio, on the other hand, gives the charge against both Clemens and Domitilla as atheism and Jewish living. Bruttius, as quoted by Eusebius,⁴

¹ Schiller, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 536.

² *Supra*, p. 75.

³ Suetonius, *Domitian*, xiv, xv.

⁴ Eusebius, *Chronicle*, Olymp., 218.

mentions Domitilla, but says nothing of Clemens. In the history Eusebius speaks generally of a number of well-born and notable men at Rome. Here again he mentions Domitilla, *daughter of a sister of Flavius Clemens, who at that time was one of the consuls of Rome*. He says nothing, however, about the martyrdom of Clemens; and certainly if Clemens had been a Christian martyr Eusebius would not have failed to mention that fact here.

Allard,¹ in his attempt to prove Flavius Clemens a Christian, reconciles Suetonius and Dio in the following manner. The supporters of Christianity were from the lower classes, and Domitian feared that Clement was trying, by associating with these people, to put either himself or his sons on the throne by fomenting an uprising of the proletariats and slaves. He further explains² that the term which Suetonius used, *inertia*, was used in connection with the Christians, due to their difficulty in reconciling the duties of the new religion with the acts of political life.³ It is significant, however, that the father of Clemens was also deficient in energy,⁴ and that Flavius may have inherited the characteristic from him, without the word having any implied meaning. Allard also gives a list of quotations⁵ to show that the Christians were regularly accused of being atheists, and holds that the accusation of atheism had at that time in pagan language no other significance than Christianity. While the majority of scholars⁶ maintain that he was a

¹ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

² *Ibid.*, p. 94 et seq.

³ *Vide* also Gsell, *Domitian*, p. 302; Tertullian, *Apol.*, 42. But *vide* Tacitus, *Annals*, xiii.

⁴ Tacitus, *History*, ii, 63; iii, 59, 65, 75. ⁵ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁶ Lightfoot, *S. Clement*, vol. i, p. 34; Linsenmayer, *Bekämpf. des Christentums*, p. 77, etc.

Christian, the entire absence of any early tradition to that effect has led Grätz¹ and others to suggest that he was a convert to Judaism. As McGiffert² remarks, if he had been a Christian, certainly an early tradition³ to that effect would be somewhere preserved. The attempt has been made to identify Flavius Clemens with St. Clement, and thus account for this absence of tradition. But Eusebius⁴ distinguishes between the two; in fact there is nothing to support the theory.⁵ This complete absence of tradition is an unanswerable argument; we have therefore no ground for assuming that Clemens was even a Christian, much less a Christian martyr.

The tradition in favor of the Christianity of Domitilla is better substantiated than that concerning Clemens. In this case Eusebius adds his authority to that of Dio, and Jerome⁶ also speaks of her as a martyr. This tradition in turn is seconded by a series of archaeological discoveries which apparently place her Christianity beyond a doubt. Inscriptions have been found which seem to prove that the catacombs of the *Tor Marancia* near the Ardeatine Way are identical with the *Coemeterium Domitillae*. The inscriptions show that the catacombs were situated on an estate once belonging to

¹ H. Grätz, *Geschichte der Juden* (Leipzig, 1872-1897), vol. iv, p. 120, p. 435 *et seq.* See also Renan, *les Evangiles* (Paris, 1877), p. 228 *et seq.*

² McGiffert, "The Church History of Eusebius," in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* (New York, 1890), vol. i, bk. iii, 18, note 6.

³ The first mention of Clemens as a martyr is that of Georgius Syncellus at the end of the eighth century (ed. Dindorf, Bonn, 1829), p. 650.

⁴ Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iii, 15, 16, 18, 34.

⁵ *Vide* Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 52-59.

⁶ Jerome, *Epistola*, cviii, 7. *Vide* pt. ii, ch. iii.

Flavia Domitilla,¹ and granted by her to her dependents for a burial place.² De Rossi argues from the architecture and painting and from the openness and publicity of the entrance that it belongs to the first century.³

The account of Eusebius⁴ has led certain writers to believe that there was a second Domitilla, a virgin niece of Clemens.⁵ Dio⁶ says Domitilla was banished to the island of Pandateria. Eusebius, on the other hand, banishes her to Pontia and calls her the daughter of a sister of Clemens instead of the daughter of a sister of Domitian⁷ and the wife of Clemens. Jerome in his letter to Eustochius follows Eusebius in naming Pontia as the island. The existence of this second Domitilla forms the basis of the fantastic story of Nereus and Achilleus. It is significant, however, that no writer mentions two Domitillas. The discrepancies could easily have crept in, since both are the daughters of the sister of the person in question, and since the two islands are near together and easily confused. The fact is that either Eusebius

¹ Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma Sotteranea* (London, 1869), vol. i, p. 69.

² C. I. L., vi, 16246, p. 1836; also vi, 8942. *Vide* pt. ii, ch. iii.

³ See Lightfoot (*op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 35 *et seq.*) for a good summary of De Rossi's conclusions. Note 5 gives specific references to De Rossi's articles in the *Bul. d. arch. crist.* *Vide* also Gsell, *Dom.*, p. 299 *et seq.*

⁴ Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iii, 18, 4. *Vide* pt. ii, ch. iii.

⁵ Tillemont, *Memoires*, vol. ii, article on S. Flavia Domitilla; De Rossi, in *Bul. d. arch. crist.*, 1865, pp. 17-24; 1875, p. 69; Wieseler, *Christenverfolgung*, pp. 4-5; Doucet, *Essai sur les rapports d'église chrétienne avec l'état romain* (Paris, 1883), p. 43; Imhof, *Domitianus*, (Halle, 1857), p. 116. Wandiger, "Flavier," in Kraus, *Realencyklopädie*, vol. i, p. 354. *Vide* Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 113, note.

⁶ Dio Cassius, *Rom. Hist.*, lxvii, 14.

⁷ Suetonius, *Dom.*, xvii; *Ves.*, iii; C. I. L., vol. vi, 948.

was mistaken or else the error is the fault of the copyists, and the belief in a virgin Domitilla must be discarded.

Glabrio may possibly have been a Christian, but there is not the slightest evidence for believing that he was a martyr of Domitian's persecution. Allard¹ and Gsell² cite Dio³ to prove that he too was put to death on the charge of atheism and Jewish living. A careful reading of the original text of Dio, however, shows at once that he was accused on various stock charges, and also of fighting with wild beasts. The statement concerning Glabrio is entirely separate and distinct from that on Domitilla and Flavius Clemens, and there is nothing whatever to indicate that he was accused of the same offences as they. Suetonius⁴ says definitely that he was put to death with other nobles for plotting a revolution, "*quasi molitores rerum.*" On the other hand, the discovery by De Rossi of the crypt of the family in the Catacombs of Priscilla on the Via Salaria seems to prove at least that many members of his family were Christians.⁵ Whether or not he was one of them is purely problematical.

The Apocalypse certainly indicates that the Christians were being oppressed in Asia Minor at the time when it was written, though many allowances must be made for the nature and tone of the work.⁶ The principal cause

¹ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

² Gsell, *Dom.*, p. 294. So Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 81, note 6; Aube, *Hist. des pers.*, pp. 164-168.

³ Dio Cassius, *Rom. Hist.*, lxxvii, 14, 3.

⁴ Suetonius, *Dom.*, 4.

⁵ Vide Gsell (*Dom.*, p. 294 *et seq.*) for a careful analysis of De Rossi's articles in *Bul. d. arch. crist.* for 1888, 1889; vide also Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome* (Boston, 1893), p. 4; Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

⁶ See Hardy, *Christ. and the Rom. Govt.*, 2nd ed., p. 74.

of the difficulties seems to have been the refusal of the Christians to worship the image of the beast, that is to say, the image of the emperor. Domitian is known to have been a supporter of the old national religion,¹ and it is altogether possible that it was during his reign that the worship of the emperor first proved to be a stumbling block for the Christians in Asia Minor.² This had become less than twenty years later the ordinary test applied to the Christians,³ though we have no way of knowing just how long that had been the case. It is likely that this test would be applied more rigorously in Asia Minor than elsewhere, since this was the very center of all ecstatic religions, and the worship of the emperor was the one thing which held their worshipers together. The Christians were also better known in Asia Minor, and were more subject to the outbreaks of the mobs here than elsewhere. It is likely, then, that the Christians generally suffered more in Asia Minor than elsewhere during this period, but even the evidence of the Apocalypse is not sufficient to establish the belief that there was any systematic persecution,⁴ either on the

¹ Schiller, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 536.

² See Gsell, *Dom.*, p. 312; Neumann, *Der röm. Staat*, p. 9. p. 15; Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

³ Pliny the Younger, *Letters to Trajan*, xcvi, quoted in pt. ii, ch. iv. Pliny in this same letter refers to cases of apostacy twenty years earlier, i. e. 92 A. D. Many writers have suggested that this, too, referred to the persecution of Domitian. It may refer to the standing persecution to which the Christians were subject, but is probably an incidental reference with no particular significance.

⁴ A sixth century reference to persecution in Asia Minor, namely, at Antioch, is found in the Antiochene Acts of Ignatius. See Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. ii, pp. 383, 477, 575. "He (Ignatius) had with difficulty weathered the past storms of the many persecutions in the time of Domitian, and, like a good pilot, by the helm of prayer and fasting, by the assiduity of his teaching, and by his spiritual earnestness, had withstood the surge of the enemy's power, fearful lest he should lose any of the faint-hearted or over-simple."

charge of *majestas*,¹ or for the refusal to worship the emperor's image.²

Domitian's death showed that his suspicions were well founded. He was treacherously murdered in his palace by a steward and freedman of Domitilla.³ There is, however, no ground for implicating Domitilla in the plot.⁴ According to Tertullian⁵ and Eusebius⁶ the supposed persecution ceased before the death of Domitian, but the other writers give Nerva the credit for restoring the exiles and for stopping the condemnations for *majestas* and for "Jewish living."⁷ According to Jerome⁸ Domitilla did not return from exile, though John returned from Patmos.⁹

¹ Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 75 *et seq.*

² But *vide* Neumann, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

³ Suetonius, *Dom.*, xvi, xvii.

⁴ As Renan does, for example (*Les Evangiles*, p. 297). Aube lays it to the Christians as a whole (*op. cit.*, p. 184 *et seq.*).

⁵ Tertullian, *Apol.*, 5.

⁶ Eusebius, *Church History*, iii, 19. But *vide* Gsell, *Domitian*, p. 315; Linsenmayer, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁷ Dio, *Rom. Hist.*, lxxviii, 1; Lactantius, *De mort. pers.*, iii; Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iii, 20, 8; Orosius, *Hist.*, vii, 11.

⁸ Jerome, *Epist.*, cviii, 7.

⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *Quis divus salvetur*, 42; Jerome, *De viris illus.*, 9; Eusebius, *op. cit.*, iii, 20, 8.

CHAPTER IV

TRAJAN AND THE CHRISTIANS

The younger Pliny, nephew and adopted son of Pliny the Elder, was born about 61 A. D.¹ At the age of nineteen he entered upon his juristic career as a pleader before the centumviral court in the Basilica Julia.² He rose rapidly in public life, and after holding a number of offices was appointed praetor about 93 or 94 A. D.³ His public career continued in the reign of Trajan, though he continued his pleading at the same time, taking part in many of the important trials during this period. It was through his defense of two governors of the province of Bithynia, probably in 104 and 106 A. D., that he became familiar with the affairs of that province.⁴ About 111 A. D.⁵ he was selected by the Emperor Trajan as governor of this same province with the special title of *legate propraetor with consular power*.

Bithynia at the time had fallen into great disorganization.⁶ The finances were in disorder,⁷ the public buildings were dilapidated,⁸ and two of the governors had

¹ Pliny, *Epistolarum libri novem* (ed. R. C. Kukula, Leipzig, 1912, T. S.), vi, 20, 5.

² *Ibid.*, v, 8, 8.

³ *Ibid.*, iii, 11, 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iii, 9; v, 20.

⁵ Compare *C. I. L.*, iii, 77, with Pliny, *Epistulae ad Trajanum* (ed. Hardy, London, 1889), 41, 61, 62.

⁶ Pliny, *Ep. ad Traj.*, 32.

⁷ Pliny, *Ep. ad Traj.*, 52, 109.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 46, 48, 49.

recently been charged with *repetundæ*.¹ It was Pliny's duty to correct these evils, and in general to remedy all abuses in the province. Under these conditions one would naturally expect a rigid administration on the part of the governor.

In administering the affairs of the province, Pliny came into contact with the Christians; but just how, he does not explain. As a sect they certainly could not have been entirely unknown to him, for at the very beginning of his career he had been military tribune in Syria, where the Christians were especially numerous.² In Bithynia at this time certain members of the sect were brought before his tribunal by informers. This information may possibly have been called forth in connection with the enforcement of the law against sodalities.³ Pliny has given a hint, however, which seems much more likely to lead us to the real informers. At the end of his letter he sums up the results of his method of procedure,—the temples were again being frequented, the sacred rites were being restored, and the fodder for victims was beginning to find purchasers. Those interested in the temple service were then, according to Pliny, the ones most directly affected by the spread of the new religion. Their means of making a livelihood was endangered. It is at least likely then that they were the ones who brought the Christians before the tribunal of Pliny.⁴

¹ Pliny, *Ep.*, v, 20; iv, 9. Vide Hardy, *Pliny* (London, 1889), p. 10.

² Kleffner, *Briefwechsel zw. dem jüngern Plinius u. Kaiser Trajan, die Christen betreffend* (Paderborn, 1907), p. 10.

³ So G. Boissier, "De l'authenticité de la lettre de Pline au sujet des Chrétiens," in *Revue archeologique*, 1876, vol. xxxi, p. 125; C. Arnold, *Zur Geschichte der Plinianischen Christenverfolgung* (Königsberg, 1889), p. 26.

⁴ Pliny, *Ep. ad Traj.*, 96, 2 and 10. So Kleffner, *op. cit.*, p. 10; Ramsay, *Ch. in the Rom. Emp.*, p. 199 *et seq.*

Turning now directly to the letter of Pliny, our one source of information for these events, we find that the letter consists of two parts.¹ The first part of the letter is made up of a series of questions for the emperor to pass upon; the second of an account of what Pliny had done. Before he puts the questions to the emperor he explains his reason for writing. He had never taken part in the trials of Christians, hence he did not know for what crime or to what extent it was customary to punish or investigate.

Pliny's confession of ignorance is not particularly surprising. Trials of Christians had not been numerous at Rome where Pliny had practiced, nor had any of the upper classes, with which Pliny was associated, been involved. Further than that, such trials would come immediately under the supervision of the emperor or of those magistrates who shared the *imperium*, and would never have reached the courts where Pliny practiced.²

On the other hand it seems pretty clear that Pliny knew that such trials had taken place, and that the penalty for those convicted was death. As Ramsay puts it, the only possible hypothesis seems to be that Pliny was acting according to a standing procedure which had grown up through use and wont. He followed a precedent and assumed that his course would be approved by the emperor.³ It should be remembered too that a

¹Vide T. Babut, "Remarques sur les deux lettres de Pline et de Trajan, relative aux chrétiens de Bithynia," in *Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuses*, 1910, p. 291. The letter is quoted *infra*, pt. ii, ch. iv.

²The *cognitiones* of the Christians took place before the administrative officers of the empire, that is, the governors of the provinces, the prefect of the city of Rome, or even the emperor himself. Vide Mommsen, "Religionsfrevel nach röm. Recht," in *Hist. Zeit.*, 1890, vol. 64, p. 414. They were conducted privately and only the result was known. Mommsen, *Römische Staatsrecht*, vol. ii, 2nd ed., p. 926.

³Vide Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 218; Hardy, *Christianity and the Rom. Govt.*, 2nd ed., p. 82.

very large number of crimes were punished with the death penalty by the Roman law. The fact that Christianity was thus punished does not necessarily indicate that it was regarded as extremely dangerous to the state.

In the second part of his letter Pliny explains the procedure which he at first followed; apparently without hesitation. He asked them whether they were Christians, apparently understanding that the mere status of being a Christian was sufficient to warrant the death penalty. If they admitted that they were, he repeated the question twice, giving them ample opportunity to deny their Christianity, and giving them to understand that if they did not recant they would be punished. Those who persisted in their confession were led away for punishment, or if they were Roman citizens were held to be sent to Rome.

Pliny does not seem to have bothered himself much about the criminality of the Christians. He simply followed precedent without giving the matter serious consideration. His knowledge of them was somewhat vague. He only knew that certain crimes *flagitia* were attributed to them, and probably took it for granted that the popular opinion was correct.¹ It was in the second stage of the trials, when he began to learn something definite about the sect, that his conscience began to trouble him. He then found it necessary to justify his action by saying that he punished them for their stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy.² That is to say he

¹ Ramsay, *Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 205.

² Hardy (*op. cit.*, 2nd ed., p. 91) explains that the state religion was, after Augustus, always regarded as a part of the imperial organization. Outward respect was required of all subjects, but this was absolutely refused by the Christians. This refusal constituted *obstinatio*. *Vide* Mommsen, in *Expositor*, 1893, p. 3. Pliny's letter does not bear out this hypothesis. He punished them as Christians and not for refusing

regarded the fact that he was deputed especially to correct the abuses and corruption due to a lax administration as sufficient excuse for severe measures against a class hated by the people, and responsible for disturbances and complaint.

Pliny's treatment of the Christians seems to have encouraged their enemies, for more cases arose. An anonymous accusation implicated many whom the legate proceeded to put to trial. He found that he had to deal with three distinct groups. The first group was made up of those who confessed and who persisted in their confession, the second of those who denied that they were or had been Christians, while the third consisted of those who at first confessed and afterwards denied their membership in the faith.

The first group appears to have caused Pliny little trouble. Those who confessed were treated just as they had been in the first stage of the trials. Still, there are many scholars who hold that the letter of Pliny was written in behalf of this very group. For example Ramsay suggests that the object of the letter was to secure a modification of the whole imperial policy towards the Christians. It was for this reason that he professed ignorance, and apologized so unduly for the letter. "Pliny," he says, "goes as far as he could go without directly suggesting a change."¹ Hardy expresses a similar interpretation, "His own investigations had apparently convinced him that the Christians were neither dangerous nor immoral: their *obstinatio* no doubt de-

to conform to the practices of the state religion. His use of the image of the emperor, etc., was simply a method of testing the sincerity of those who denied their Christianity, or who recanted. Vide *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1910, *loc. cit.*, p. 303.

¹ Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 221 *et seq.*; p. 217.

served death, but was it necessary to pursue a course which called forth this *obstinatio*?"¹ This theory that Pliny was endeavoring to nullify the imperial policy is to an extent supported by Tertullian,² who says that Pliny wrote to Trajan because he was alarmed at the very number of those involved.

The second group was also easily disposed of. He thought they ought to be dismissed since they repeated after him an invocation to the gods and made supplication with incense and wine to the image of the emperor, which he had ordered to be brought for that very purpose. Furthermore they reviled Christ, proving conclusively that they were not Christians. For, he says, those who were really Christians could not be compelled to do a single one of these things.³ Here it should be noticed that this procedure was simply a test. Both in the case of those who denied their Christianity and of the apostates, this test was applied to prove their sincerity. There is no indication that Pliny put the Christians to death for refusing to worship the image of the emperor.⁴

The last group, on the other hand, caused Pliny more difficulty. Some of them had ceased to be Christians long before, a few even twenty years before. He put them to the same tests that he had applied to the second group and they complied. Since they were no longer Christians they could not be punished as such. On the other hand, what about those crimes that they were

¹ Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., p. 82; Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church*, p. 212.

² Tertullian, *Apol.*, ii.

³ Babut (in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1910, p. 294 *et seq.*) answers the criticism that this passage of the letter is an interpolation.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

supposed to have committed? If they had been guilty of child murders and of incestuous immorality at their meetings while they were Christians, the mere fact that they now no longer belonged to the sect should not render them immune.

This question probably did not come up during the first stage of the trials. Pliny's language indicates that he had at first freed all renegades.¹ It was only those who were obstinate that were led away for punishment. Why then this change in Pliny's attitude? What had caused him to become more severe in spite of the fact that such a large number was involved? It certainly was not because he was in favor of adopting more severe measures, so as to hold the renegades for the *flagitia* attributed to the name. The tone of his whole letter implies that he was, on the contrary, in favor of freeing them. The last part of his letter particularly is an appeal to the emperor to permit him to free those whom he was detaining and to permit repentance.

Some influence must have been brought to bear upon Pliny to cause him to start his investigation into the alleged crimes. This influence may have been nothing more than public opinion.² Or it may have been due to the influence of the original informers, those who first brought the Christians before the court of Pliny. A theory has recently been developed, however, which explains Pliny's action perfectly. It is that the question arose out of a debate in the provincial council.³ The

¹ Neumann, *Der röm. Staat*, p. 20. Also Babut, *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1910, p. 291.

² So Neumann, *Der röm. Staat*, p. 20.

³ A remark made by Mommsen (in *Hist. Zeit.*, 1890, p. 416) was taken up by Babut and made the basis of a very able and convincing argument. Absolute proof is of course out of the question in the absence of any direct evidence. *Vide Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1910, *loc. cit.*, p. 293 *et seq.*

council, which agreed with Pliny in persecuting those who confessed, objected to his policy of freeing those who recanted.¹ Pliny's letter grew out of this difference of opinion. He held the renegades until he could consult the emperor and get his sanction for the course which he had pursued.²

Pliny's investigations only served to strengthen his opinion that the apostates should be acquitted. By questioning the renegades he discovered nothing in any way criminal. They insisted that they had done nothing except to meet before daybreak at regular intervals for a service in which they sang hymns to Christ as a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not for some crime, but that they would not commit theft, robbery, or adultery, that they would not betray a trust, nor deny a deposit when called upon. Later in the day they came together again for the Agape.³ To confirm this evidence Pliny now proceeded to put to torture two female slaves who were called deaconesses. He found nothing but a vicious, extravagant superstition. He therefore postponed the examination and hastened to consult the emperor.

He considered the whole question one particularly worthy of a consultation because of the great number of those involved. Many of all ages, of every rank, and even of both sexes were implicated. Nor was the infection of this superstition confined to the large cities, but it had spread to the villages and the country districts as well. Still further, this condition had existed long enough to affect the temple service, for the temples were

¹ *Vide Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1910, *loc. cit.*, p. 298.

² *Ibid.*, p. 293 *et seq.*

³ *Vide* E. Baumgarten, "Cibum sumere promiscuum et tamen innoxium." in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*, 1909, vol. 33, pp. 50-66.

deserted, the sacred rites neglected, and the fodder for victims found scarcely a purchaser.

The three questions which Pliny submitted to Trajan in the first part of his letter have to do with these renegades and apostates. The real question is, shall they be freed or shall they be punished for the *flagitia*. This is really expressed in his last question,—is the name itself, without regard to crimes or are the crimes attributed to the name to be punished? Upon the answer to this question depends the answer to the preceding, does he who has been a Christian gain nothing by having ceased to be one, or is pardon granted for repentance? If he is punished for crimes at law, of course he gains nothing; but if he is punished for the name alone, then if he no longer possesses the name he is not guilty and should be freed. The answer to the first question would also depend on the answer to the third. There was no fixed age of penal liability in Roman law. The judge determined whether or not the minor was to be held responsible according to the nature of the act.¹ If they were punished for *flagitia* the age of discretion would be reached sooner than if they were punished for membership in an illicit religious sect. Pliny asked the first question, not because he was seeking information on that point, but because his answer to that question would determine his answer to the other two. Trajan's humanity would compel him to admit that there should be discrimination for age; that answer would logically lead to the decision which Pliny wanted, namely that the renegades should be acquitted.

Trajan apparently interpreted the questions just as

¹ Mommsen, *Römische Strafrecht*, p. 76; Mommsen, *Digesta Justiniani* (Berlin, 1870), xxix, 5, 14. *Vide Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1910, *loc. cit.*, p. 297.

Pliny had intended. He hesitated to lay down any definite rule which should be applied to all cases, but he outlined a practice which implied the rule. He answered directly only the second question proposed in the letter, but that is quite sufficient to show his approval of Pliny's procedure. One who was proven to be a Christian was to be punished. But one who denies that he is such, and proves it by the usual tests shall be pardoned on repentance. This applied to the renegades as well as to those who denied their membership at first, for it made no difference how much he may have been suspected in the past.

It is possible that Trajan was impressed by the information contained in the letter, and in fact by the tone of the letter itself, for he makes important concessions. In the first place they ought not to be sought out. That is to say the government should adopt so far as was possible the policy of *laissez faire*. It was only when they were brought before the tribunal by their enemies that the court should take cognizance of their crime. They were not a political danger and as long as they were not the cause of disturbances they should be left alone. It seems pretty clear that Trajan regarded the question as one of police administration. The sole object was to preserve peace and quiet in the provinces. As disturbers of this peace the Christians must be punished; but so long as they were not the cause of riots or were not brought into court they should not be interfered with.

His second concession was to insist for the future upon the regularity of the proceedings. In spite of the provisions of Roman Law against receiving anonymous accusations¹ Pliny had proceeded to put to trial those

¹ Paul, in *Digesta Justiniani* (ed. Mommsen, Berlin, 1870), xlviii, 2, 3, § 2.

thus accused. For this action the emperor gently chides him, and reminds him that such accusations are altogether inadmissible.

This rescript has been regarded from different points of view by different writers. By some, particularly by the early fathers, it has been looked upon as favorable to the Christians.¹ By others² it has been regarded as the first legal authorization of persecution. To an extent both points of view are correct. It was favorable to the Christians, in that it sanctioned the freeing of renegades. They could henceforth always secure pardon by forsaking their religion. It also gave them a certain security; for they were not to be sought out, and were to receive a regular trial. Henceforth it was their private enemies which they had to fear.

But the rescript is also the first legal authorization of persecution, or at least the first that we know anything about. Christianity was hereby definitely declared to be a *religio illicita*, and membership in the sect was a crime punishable with death. This does not mean that they had not been so treated before. Heretofore, so far as we know, each governor had used his own discretion to a large extent. It was his duty to preserve the peace and good order of the province, and in so doing was allowed a large amount of latitude. It is true, that by the time of

¹ Tertullian, *Apology*, v; Melito in Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iv, 26; Lactantius, *De mort. pers.*, 3; vide pt. ii, ch. iv. None of these regard Trajan as a persecutor, properly speaking. Vide Ramsay, *Ch. in the Rom. Emp.*, pp. 221-222; Hardy, *Christ. and the Rom. Govt.*, 2nd ed., p. 88.

² F. O. Verbeck, *Studien zur Geschichte der alten Kirche* (Basel, 1875), pp. 93-157; Aube, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 225; J. Dierauer, "Beiträge zur einer kritischen Geschichte Trajans," in Büdinger, *Untersuchungen zur römischen Kaisergeschichte* (Leipzig, 1868), p. 118; Guignebert, *Tertullien* (Paris, 1901), p. 80 et seq.; McGiffert, *Church History of Eusebius*, iii, 33, note 6.

Pliny the precedent that they were to be punishable with death as a class dangerous to the good order of society, was pretty firmly established. But that precedent had developed particularly where they were very numerous, and a constant source of popular tumult. On the other hand, from the time of Pliny on, the policy of the Roman government was fixed. Henceforth there could be no question as to whether definite crimes had to be proven; Christianity was now a crime, the *nomen ipsum* was sufficient. They were no longer punished for ritual crimes of which they were supposed to be guilty; they were punished for the crime of Christianity.¹ Whereas before this time the administrative officer was at liberty to inquire as much or as little as he pleased into the charge or charges made against the Christians, from this time on such inquiry would be altogether unnecessary; the mere name was sufficient. But it must be constantly borne in mind that anything like a general persecution was out of the question in view of the fact that the Christians were not to be sought out.

However, this rescript was directed to the governor of a particular province. Its application would accordingly extend legally only to that province.² But the rescript was an expression of the imperial will, and as such would be carried into effect wherever it became known.³ And it just happened that it became pretty generally known because the letters were published a few years later in the correspondence of Pliny and Trajan.⁴

¹ Guignebert, *Tertullien*, p. 80 et seq.; *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1910, *loc. cit.*, p. 305. But cf. Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

² Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., p. 93; also *Correspondence of Pliny and Trajan*, introduction, p. 63.

³ Papinian, in *Digesta Justiniani*, xlviii, ii, 22, "principes nostri generaliter rescripserunt."

⁴ Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 217; Neumann, *Der röm. Staat*, p. 23.

The history of the second century indicates that the rescript became for all practical purposes a law in force throughout the empire.¹

(We have in Pliny's letter a remarkable account of the sort of thing that was likely to take place at any time in the provinces where the Christians were most numerous. The Christians, hated by the Jews and despised by the gentiles, and the objects of calumny and slander from both, had come to be regarded as a class dangerous to the peace and good order of society. They had come to be looked upon as public enemies, and as such were punished wherever the tranquillity of the province was endangered.)

In this whole procedure of Pliny we have a most striking example of the exercise of administrative power of police. As was suggested in the opening chapter the higher magistrates were invested with a very large power of immediate action on their own responsibility for checking any disorder or abuse, and for correcting and chastising any person who was acting in a way prejudicial or likely to be prejudicial to the state. It was in virtue of this power that Pliny punished the Christians brought before him. Had there existed a definite edict² proscribing the Christians, Pliny would have had no occasion for addressing such a letter to the emperor. As Ramsay expresses it, he refers to the

¹ Neumann, *op. cit.*, p. 23; L. Guérin, "Étude sur le fondement juridique des persécutions," in *Nouvelle Revue hist. du droit français et étranger*, 1895, p. 640; Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 171.

² Allard (*Hist. des pers.*, p. 166 *et seq.*) and Callewaert (*Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, 1902, vol. iii, p. 9, *et seq.*; *ibid.*, 1911, vol. xii, p. 643) interpret the letter as proof that such an edict did exist. Renan (*les Évangiles*, p. 483) says the response was not a law, but it presupposed a law and fixed its meaning. *Vide* also Neumann, *Der röm. Staat*, p. 20.

emperor, not questions of law, but questions of administration and policy.¹

The fact that we are fortunate enough to have this one excellent source for the period of Trajan is likely to obscure any other information which has come down to us. It is quite probable that there were similar events in other provinces besides Bithynia; and it is just this sort of persecution to which the Apocalypse seems to refer, namely to continuous outbreaks due to the hostility of the inhabitants in general. There is at least room for doubt as to whether this strange document refers to the reign of Domitian or to the reign of Trajan.² But there are one or two other references referring to this period which do indicate that there were outbreaks elsewhere, resulting even in cases of martyrdom.

Eusebius³ in his account of this period makes the general statement that a persecution was stirred up in certain cities in consequence of a popular uprising. Besides the events in Bithynia, the account of which he takes from Tertullian, he describes the martyrdom of Symeon, the second bishop of Jerusalem. For this story he follows the account of Hegesippus, according to whom Symeon was accused by certain heretics of belonging to the race of David and of being a Christian. Since it was clear that he was a Christian he suffered martyrdom after being tortured for many days.

The procedure in this case was apparently the same as that adopted by Pliny. Without doubt the object of

¹ Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

² *Vide* pt. ii, ch. iii. A number of scholars also assign First Peter to this period. See particularly Holtzmann, in Schenkel's *Bibel-Lexikon*, vol. iv, p. 296. *Vide* pt. ii, ch. ii.

³ Eusebius, *Church History*, iii, 32.

the torture was to make him recant. Hegesippus says nothing to indicate that there were other martyrs. Perhaps Symeon was picked out as being the representative of the sect, or perhaps there was a more serious uprising in Jerusalem at the time of the martyrdom, probably near the year 107 A. D.

The martyrdom of Ignatius of Antioch appears to have occurred at about the same time.¹ Polycarp² connects the names of Zosimus and Rufus with that of Ignatius. At Phillipi also, according to Polycarp, the Christians were in danger. Some appear to have already suffered martyrdom, for he speaks of them as suffering like the three just mentioned. The rest he exhorts to be obedient and to practise the same endurance as they had witnessed in the others.

Eusebius sums up the situation in the East very well indeed when he attributes the persecutions to popular uprisings.³ Even after the rescript of Trajan, he concludes, there were still left plenty of pretexts for those who wished to do the Christians harm. Sometimes the people, sometimes the rulers in various places, would lay plots against them, so that, although no great persecution took place, local persecutions were nevertheless going on in particular provinces, and many of the faithful endured martyrdom in various forms.⁴

The names of four martyrs from this period have come down to us, whereas up to this point we are sure of but

¹ Eusebius, *Chronicon*, ad *Olymp.*, 221. Ramsay (*op. cit.*, p. 317) suggests 112-117 A. D. Concerning the situation of the church in Asia Minor *vide* Ignatius, *To the Romans*, v; *Philadelphians*, x; *Smyrnians*, xi; *To Polycarp*, 7; *To the Ephesians*, i, iii, x; in Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius*, *S. Polycarp*, vols. ii, iii.

² Polycarp, *To the Philippians*, ix, in Lightfoot, *op. cit.*

³ Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iii, 32, i.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iii, 33, ii.

one or two. The whole number of martyrs during this reign, in fact the whole number up to this time is probably very small, comparatively speaking. Eusebius¹ certainly exaggerates when he speaks of a great number of martyrs under Pliny, and says that the persecution had threatened to be a most terrible one.² Origen³ is much nearer the truth when he says, speaking of the number of martyrs up to his own time, that a few had been engaged in a struggle for their religion.⁴ "Some," he says, "on special occasions, and these individuals who can be easily numbered, have endured death for the sake of Christianity, God not permitting the whole nation to be exterminated, but desiring that it should continue . . . dispersing by an act of his will alone all the conspiracies formed against them; so that neither kings, nor rulers, nor the populace might be able to rage against them beyond a certain point."

A number of *Acta* are supposed to recount martyrdoms of this period, but none of them are of any substantial value. Allard⁵ would include among the authentic martyrs the chamberlains of Domitilla, Nereus

¹ Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iii, 33, i.

² *Ibid.*, iii, 33, ii.

³ Origen, *Contra Celsum* (ed. Koetschau, Leipzig, 1899, G. C. S.), iii, 8.

⁴ The Armenian Acts of Phocas give the number as about five hundred. According to the Acts, Phocas suffered under Pliny's successor, Africanus. *Vide* F. Conybeare, *The Apology and Acts of Apollonius and other Monuments of Early Christianity* (London, 1894), p. 89 *et seq.* He would place the acts probably at the end of the second century. See, however, Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius* (Leipzig, 1897), vol. i, p. 317. The evidence of the Acts is of no value. Ramsay (*Ch. in the Rom. Emp.*, p. 220) suggests 100 or 200 martyrs.

⁵ Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 174 *et seq.*

and Achilleus. But the *Acta*¹ which recount their martyrdom are late and of no value whatever. Allard² also thinks the story of the martyrdom of S. Clement at least credible. But as Lightfoot³ says, these *Acta* are evidently fictitious from beginning to end. Clement to be sure was accepted as a martyr after the beginning of the fifth century, for example by Rufinus,⁴ Zosimus,⁵ and by the synod of Vaison⁶ in 442, but there is no foundation for this late tradition.⁷ The Acts of Sharbil and Barsamya, which also refer to the period of Trajan, are worth no more. As Lightfoot⁸ says, "The whole story indeed . . . is founded on the correspondence of Pliny and Trajan, and is disfigured by the worst exaggerations of a debased hagiology."

¹ *Acta Nerii* in *Acta Sanctorum*, May, vol. iii, p. 11, *vide* Nov., vol. i, p. 121. *Vide* Achelis, "Die Acta S.S. Nerii und Achillei," in *Texte und Untersuchungen*, vol. xi (Leipzig, 1893), p. 66 *et seq.*; Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

² Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 179 *et seq.* The acts are given by F. Funk, *Patres Apostolici* (Tübingen, 1901), vol. ii, p. 28 *et seq.*

³ Lightfoot, *S. Clement*, vol. i, p. 86.

⁴ Rufinus, *Dissertatio de Adulteratione Librorum Originis*, quoted in Jerome, *Apologia adversus Libros Rufini*, ii, 17. (Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, vol. xxiii, p. 459.)

⁵ Zosimi, *Epistolae*, ii, 2. (Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, vol. xx, p. 650.)

⁶ Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Collectio* (Florence, 1761), vol. vi, p. 454. Synod of Vaison, Canon 6.

⁷ Lightfoot suggests a confusion with Flavius Clemens, *S. Clement*, vol. i, p. 87. *Vide* Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

⁸ Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. i, p. 69. Defended, however, by Moesinger, *Acta SS. Martyrum Edessenorum* (Oenoponti, 1874), and by Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents* (London, 1864), p. 186. See F. Görres, "Kaiser Trajan und die Christliche Tradition," in *Zeitschrift f. Wissenschaft Theologie*, 1877, vol. xxi, p. 39.

CHAPTER V

ATTITUDE OF HADRIAN

MEAGER though they are, the sources upon the situation in Asia Minor under Hadrian are sufficient to give us a somewhat definite impression concerning his attitude toward the Christians. Asia Minor was, and had always been, a center for strange cults. Recent research in archæology and anthropology have substantiated its ancient reputation in this regard. And here Christianity was more definitely forced upon the administration as a problem. As Hardy,¹ in an excellent paragraph, expresses it, "Asia was undoubtedly the province in which the Christian difficulty was most urgent and most persistent. Here probably the Christians were most numerous, the populace most hostile, and accusers most plentiful; here, too, all the social conditions most repugnant to and most impatient of Christian ideas of morality were most pronounced and most deeply rooted. Here certainly, sometimes in one city, sometimes in another, persecution must have been almost continuous and permanent. The proconsuls may have observed, and probably they did so, the principle of Trajan, not to search out offenders, but this in a province so full of sycophants, sophists, and *delatores*, was but scant protection."² And not only were real Christians brought before the tribunal of the proconsul. In a case where so little

¹ Hardy, *Christianity and the Rom. Govt.*, 2nd ed., p. 108.

² Mommsen, *Röm. Gesch.*, vol. v, p. 333 *et seq.*

had to be substantiated, where the mere 'nomen Christiani' was the gist, nay the whole, of the charge, there was every inducement to make a trade of this sort of delation, to accuse or to threaten with accusation those who were not Christians, and then to exact money for letting proceedings drop."¹

Under such circumstances certain abuses had developed in Asia Minor. Before the popular excitement caused by the calumnies² and excitations of the enemies of Christianity, some of the magistrates must have forsaken the principles of the Roman Law. Perhaps out of mere weakness, or out of the desire for popular favor, they yielded to the outcries of the mob³ and condemned some Christians by extra-legal measures. Under these conditions and in view of these abuses the governor of the province addressed a letter of inquiry to the Emperor.

Of this letter to Hadrian written by Granianus, the predecessor of Fundanus, we have only a short résumé. In fact, we find a different summary of the letter in the *Church History* of Eusebius from that in Jerome's version of the chronicle. In the history⁴ he says that the letter concerning the Christians stated that it was unjust to slay them without a regular indictment and trial, merely for the sake of gratifying the outcries of the populace. The statement in the *Chronicle*⁵ reads as follows: "He sent *letters* to the emperor, saying that it

¹ See Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 4, where he refers to a case of this nature which came up probably during the reign of Marcus Aurelius.

² See Melito, in Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iv, 26, also "Martyrdom of Polycarp" (in Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius*, *S. Polycarp*, vol. iii, p. 353 *et seq.*), iii, 2; x, 2; xii, 2, 3.

³ Cf. Tertullian, *Apology*, 40.

⁴ Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iv, 8, 6.

⁵ Jerome's Translation of Eusebius' *Chronicon*, ad Olymp., 226.

was very unjust to sacrifice the blood of innocent men to the clamors of the mob, and to make criminals of those who had committed no crime, simply for the name alone and for their belief."

The two accounts by no means harmonize. The first statement is directed against the extra-legal procedure which had developed in the province. Gratianus wants the law enforced; he wants those accused of being Christians to have a regular trial. He in no way questions, or suggests a change in, the legislation of Trajan; quite the contrary, he wants that legislation enforced. His object is to preserve order and not to save the Christians. The résumé in Jerome's version of the *Chronicle*, on the other hand, is decidedly favorable to the Christians. Jerome imputes to Gratianus the boldness of asking that the legislation of the Emperor's adoptive father be abrogated. To suggest that the name alone and the membership in the sect was not sufficient reason for putting the Christians to death, is to ask for a complete change of policy on the part of the Roman government. But that is exactly what Jerome says that Gratianus wrote.

In this case, however, it is pretty clear that Jerome and not Eusebius is responsible for the variation. If we compare Jerome's version with the translation of the Armenian version, we see at once that the Armenian *corresponds exactly* with the text of the Church History.¹

¹ Eusebius, *Chronicle* (Translation from the Armenian by J. Karst, Leipzig, 1911, G. C. S.), ad Olymp. 226. Er hatte aber auch von Serenios, . . . eine Schrift über die Christen empfangen, dass es nicht Rechtens wäre, jene zu töten auf blosses Gerücht hin ohne Untersuchung und bei keinerlei Anklagegrund. Cf. the Latin translation in the edition of Schoene (Berlin, 1866). Acceperat tamen et . . . scriptum de christianis, quod nempe iniquum sit occidere eos solo rumore sine inquisitione, neque ulla incusatione.

According to the Armenian, Granianus said that it was unjust to put the Christians to death upon report alone, without an examination and without any accusation. This is precisely the same idea that is expressed by Eusebius in the *Church History*, and is practically conclusive evidence that the two accounts of Eusebius originally agreed.

Nor are we dependent alone upon the Armenian version in order to prove that Jerome's statement is merely his own amplification. It happens that this particular passage of the *Chronicon* has been preserved probably almost verbatim in the *Chronographia* of Georgius Syncellus, who wrote at the beginning of the ninth century. It is from the chronicle of Syncellus, who made very abundant use of the *Chronicon* of Eusebius, that scholars have been able to reconstruct a large part of the original chronicle.¹ This account² also agrees almost exactly with that of the Armenian text. He too emphasizes the fact that it was unjust to put the Christians to death without trial and without any accusation.

There can hardly be the slightest doubt then that the two accounts of Eusebius originally agreed. He understood perfectly well that Granianus wrote that it was unjust to slay the Christians without a regular denunciation and trial, merely for the sake of gratifying the outcries of the populace. The variation found in Jerome, which has such a decided Christian flavor, is altogether without foundation. It is his own amplification pure and simple.³

¹*Vide* Schoene's edition of the *Chronicon*. Scaliger long ago called attention to the importance of this for the reconstruction of the *Chronicon*.

²Georgius Syncellus, *Chronographia*, Ann. Mundi, 5609. *Vide* pt. ii, ch. v.

³Allard, *Le Christianisme et l'empire romain* (Paris, 1908), p. 41;

Turning to Hadrian's answer to this letter of inquiry, we find that it is for the most part devoted to answering the questions raised by Granianus. The Emperor states his object in the second sentence. He has a double purpose,—in the first place to prevent the people of the province from being harassed by the outcries and petitions of the mob, and secondly, to put a stop to the misuse of delation and false accusation. In other words his purpose is to restore order, to correct those abuses called to his attention by the letter of Granianus. He is not for a moment thinking of protecting the Christians as a sect; he is thinking only of preserving order. Incidentally he is particularly anxious to protect those who are falsely accused of being Christians,¹ who have been confused with the Christians by the blind passion of the mob, or by the denunciation of sycophants who thought only of their legal fee of one-fourth of the property of the accused.²

The Latin text of Rufinus is misleading on this point. The word *innocui*, which he uses without any apparent justification, leaves an entirely different impression. He not only does not distinguish the two objects of the rescript as Hadrian states them, but he appears to the casual reader to mean by this term the Christians. If so, the rescript would seem to have for its object the pro-

Weiss, *Christenverfolgungen*, p. 70, in fact practically all scholars have accepted the Latin text of the *Chronicon*. So far as I know the only exception is C. Callewaert ("Le rescrit d'Hadrien à Minucius Fundanus," in *Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuses*, 1903, vol. viii, p. 156), who accepts the reading of the *Ch. Hist.* on the ground that Eusebius was better able to give an exact account of the bearing of the imperial rescript and the letter which provoked it when he wrote the History.

¹ So Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 252.

² See Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* (London, 1905), p. 25 *et seq.* See also Tacitus, *Annals*, iv, 20.

tection of the Christian sect, but as we understand it, this was by no means the purpose of the rescript.¹

Hadrian then turns to the important question of Gracianus concerning the irregular procedure. He says very definitely that petitions and popular accusations² must not be recognized, but if the accusation is well founded so that it can be sustained *even* in a court of law, then let the accusers follow the regular procedure. The complainant must no longer excite a credulous mob, which in turn would demand the execution of the suspect. "For," writes the emperor, "it is far more proper, if any one wishes to make an accusation, that you should examine into it."

The single short statement in which Hadrian referred to the regular procedure is so concise that it is bound to leave something wanting in the way of clearness. "If anyone therefore accuses them," it reads, "and shows that they are doing anything contrary to the laws, do you pass judgment according to the nature of the crime." He seems to assume in accordance with the rescript of Trajan that they are not to be sought out. They are to be brought before the tribunal in the regular manner. The accuser, however, is to show that they are doing something contrary to the laws, and if the case is proven the magistrate is to pass judgment according to the nature of the crime.

¹ See the discussion in pt. ii, ch. v, on the text of the rescript.

² T. Keim ("Bedenken gegen die Ächtheit des Hadrianischen Reskript," in *Theologische Jahrbücher* 1856, vol. xv, p. 389) mistakenly holds that ἀξιώσεις means delations and hence applies to individual delators. He thinks, then, that the rescript would prohibit the ordinary process of which Trajan approved. βολαί applies, he says, to calumnious accusations. *Contra*, Callewaert, in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, *loc. cit.*, p. 158 *et seq.* *Vide* Mommsen, *Römische Strafrecht*, pp. 381, 1017.

Ramsay¹ comes pretty close to the mark in his interpretation of this passage. "There is," he says, "a studied vagueness in regard to crimes of which proof is required. It is not expressly admitted, as it was by Trajan, that the Name is a crime; on the other hand, that established principle is not rescinded. As to the offence against the law which must be proven against the Christians, it is quite open to any governor to consider that the name is an offence; but it would also be quite possible for him to infer from the rescript that some more definite crime must be proved." The history of the following century shows that the name was sufficient, and that ordinarily it was necessary only to allege and prove the Christianity of the accused. In fact it is safe to say that after the rescript of Trajan Christianity in itself was a crime, and was included as such in this sentence of Hadrian². What the penalty was for those convicted was well understood.

In fact one would almost be inclined to believe that this was the uniform procedure except for the evidence of a single passage of Justin Martyr.³ Justin here makes it very clear that in some cases at least the examination went further than simply to prove the Christianity of the accused. He writes that after some were put to death upon the false evidence brought against them, their families, either children or weak women, were also dragged to the torture and compelled to confess to those fabu-

¹ Ramsay, *Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 323. Callewaert, on the other hand, believes that it is ambiguous only for those who do not believe that laws forbidding Christianity existed which Hadrian presupposed. *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, *loc. cit.*, p. 174, note 1.

² Allard (*Hist. des pers.*, p. 253) suggests that Hadrian has in mind the crime of being a Christian without reference to any ordinary crimes.

³ Justin, *Apology*, ii, 12.

lous actions, which their accusers openly perpetrated. This was written some twenty-five years after Hadrian's rescript, but Justin is apparently referring to the time of his conversion, which took place near the end of the reign of Hadrian. That this procedure was exceptional, however, is shown by the oft-repeated allusions of the same writer to persecution for the name alone.¹

In the final sentence Hadrian refers to the treatment of those who falsely accuse one of being a Christian. The calumniator is to be punished according to the established principles of Roman Law. The emperor simply recalls the principle because of the abuse of delation which had developed in Asia. According to the Roman Law the calumniator should be punished before the same *quaestio* before which he had brought his victim. This procedure was fixed by law, the penalty was severe, and legally determined.² In the *cognitio*, however, where the trials of Christians took place, these rules were not obligatory.³ The object of the emperor is simply to impress upon the governor the necessity of severely punishing the sycophants.⁴

As has been suggested, the purpose of the emperor was simply to restore order and to insist upon regularity in the judicial proceedings. It was by no means intended to be a declaration of religious tolerance. Neither did it grow out of any sympathy for the Christian sect. But, by the very fact that it aimed to put down tumultuous proceedings it was bound to affect the Christians

¹ Justin, *Apology*, i, 3, 4, 11, 39; ii, 2. *Vide* pt. ii, ch. i.

² Mommsen, *Rom. Straf.*, pp. 490-497. *Vide* Callewaert, in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, *loc. cit.*, p. 162.

³ Mommsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 497-498; 369, note 5.

⁴ *Cf. Digesta Justiniani*, xlix, 14, 2, § 5.

favorably.¹ By necessitating a regular accusation and by prescribing a severe punishment for the delator unable to prove his charge it rendered their position much more secure. It should constantly be borne in mind, however, that this was wholly an indirect effect of the rescript.²

We might be able to attain a better understanding of Hadrian's real point of view if we were more sure of the value of the statement of Lampridius³ and the supposed letter of Hadrian found in Vopiscus.⁴ The former attributes to Hadrian the desire to receive Christ among the Roman gods, and for that purpose, he says, that emperor ordered temples without images to be built in all cities. But even if we could accept this hearsay evidence it would indicate an attempt at syncretism rather than any leaning toward or sympathy for Christianity. If, on the other hand, the letter in Vopiscus has any value, it shows quite the opposite of respect. Those who pretend to worship Serapis, runs this letter, are in reality Christians, and even the bishops of Christ are actually worshipers of Serapis. When the Jewish patriarch comes to Egypt he is compelled by some of his followers to worship Christ, by others he is compelled to worship Serapis. All, the Christians, the Jews, and the followers of Serapis alike, have but a single god, and that god is "the almighty dollar." But the evidence of either one of these extracts is of so doubtful a value that

¹ So Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 254.

² But cf. Weis, *Christenverfolgungen*, p. 73, who says that the rescript had no other purpose than to lessen the number of trials of Christians. For a refutation of this view see Callewaert, in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, *loc. cit.*, p. 157.

³ Lampridius, *Vita Alex. Sev.*, 43, 6, 7. Quoted in pt. ii, ch. v.

⁴ Vopiscus, *Vita Satur.*, 8. Quoted in pt. ii, ch. v.

it is unsafe to draw from them any conclusions whatever as to Hadrian's attitude.

This rescript of Hadrian, like that of Trajan, was directed to a single governor, and directly applied only to the province of Asia. Whether or not it had any effect outside of the vicinity of that province is at least doubtful. In the first place it was probably unknown outside of the neighborhood of the province of Asia. In the second place it was aimed at certain abuses, and even if known, its provisions would be enforced only where similar abuses existed.

But if we are to believe Melito,¹ Hadrian appears to have sent similar rescripts to many others as well as to Fundanus. Melito mentions this fact in connection with a discussion of the false accusations directed against the Christians, and the rescripts of the predecessors of Marcus Aurelius, which had rebuked many who dared to attempt new measures against them. The natural conclusion is that Hadrian wrote to the others on questions of the same nature, and that he had insisted upon a regular procedure and had forbidden false accusations wherever the occasion demanded.

In general the attitude of Hadrian did not differ essentially from that of his adoptive father. As Callewaert² expresses it, he showed the same care for regularity in the administration of the provinces and in the promotion of justice. He in no way revoked any of the principles established by Trajan, nor did he change to any extent the legal status of the Christians, except to render them more secure by insisting upon a certain regularity in the procedure directed against them.

¹ Quoted in Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iv. *Vide* pt. ii, ch. v.

² Callewaert, "Le Res. d'Had.," in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, p. 161. So also Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

Callewaert sees in the rescript to Minucius Fundanus further proof that there were in existence from the beginning laws forbidding the Christian sect.¹ But if Hadrian had in mind a law which prohibited Christianity, it was in all probability the law of Trajan. The rescript of Trajan to Pliny definitely made Christianity a crime punishable with death. If there had been previous legislation of this nature every trace of it has completely perished.

On the other hand it is likely that the rescript of Hadrian did produce a certain change in procedure. Up to the time of Trajan at least, the Christians had been punished by measures of police in virtue of the power of *coercitio* vested in the higher magistrates. That is to say, these magistrates had the power to take the initiative in cases not regulated by law, where such action was judged necessary to maintain public order. However, the two rescripts together, at least in those provinces where they were known and hence were law, would so fix the legal status of the Christians that this administrative power would be considerably limited. Henceforth, the regular form of delation or accusation would be the normal mode of procedure. It would only be in special cases, where the peace and good order of society were especially disturbed, that the magistrates would take the initiative against the Christians. There would still be a place for both methods of procedure, but the more regular would be by information charging the accused with the crime of Christianity.²

¹ Callewaert, in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, *loc. cit.*, p. 69 *et seq.* But see Weis (*Christenverfolgungen*, p. 71), who finds in this rescript positive evidence in favor of the theory that the Christians were punished by measures of police.

² See Harnack, "Das Edikt des Antoninus Pius," in *Texte und*

At the end of the reign of Hadrian the status of the Christians, at least in Asia Minor, and with all probability in a much wider zone, might be summed up somewhat as follows. They were not to be sought out and the magistrates were not to recognize anonymous accusations, nor were they to recognize the irregular and tumultuous accusations of the mob. All regular delations and accusations, however, were to be examined into and if the accused proved to be a Christian he was to be punished with death. If, on the other hand, he apostatized and proved his sincerity by the ordinary tests he should be acquitted. If the accused was not a Christian and the accusation had been calumnious, then the false accuser should be severely punished.¹

In looking over the church writers of the early fifth century we find that a tradition had developed which is entirely unsubstantiated by any reliable evidence. One reads with interest the statement of Sulpicius Severus,² that the fourth persecution took place under Hadrian. Either he was much better informed on this period than we can ever hope to be, or else he reveals to us what the word persecution really means in the later Christian tradition. Jerome goes one step further and calls it a most severe persecution, *gravissimam persecutionem*.

Writers of a still later period, accepting this tradition, found the reign of Hadrian a very convenient period about which to write a species of historical romances, many of which were later accepted as the true stories of Christian martyrdoms. In all probability there were

Untersuchungen, vol. xiii (Leipzig, 1895), p. 44 *et seq.* But see Callewaert (in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, p. 173), who rejects entirely the use of the power of *coercitio*. For this whole question see pt. i, ch. i.

¹ Callewaert, in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, p. 189.

² Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.*, ii, 31, 3. Quoted in pt. ii, ch. v.

here and there a few martyrdoms during this period, and the letter of Gratianus would indicate that there were such in Asia Minor, but as to the details we have no information whatever. In fact we know the name of just one martyr, Telesphorus, who, according to the catalogue of Irenaeus,¹ was the seventh bishop of Rome, but we know absolutely nothing about the details. Even the date of his martyrdom is not certain, as it has been assigned both to the last years of Hadrian and to the first year of Antoninus Pius.²

Perhaps the best known of the acts which refer to the period under consideration are those of Symphorosa and her seven sons.³ Allard accepts the acts and holds that it is impossible to doubt the reality of their martyrdom.⁴ A relative value has been assigned to them by Tillemont⁵ and by Overbeck,⁶ but they have been attacked by other scholars. Aube, for example, says that they appear to him to be absolutely apocryphal.⁷ Lightfoot condemns the *Acta* unconditionally, but says that some of the names as Crescens and Julianus may have represented genuine martyrs.⁸ But even so there is no reason to believe that

¹ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, iii, 3, 3. Vide pt. ii, ch. v.

² Lipsius, *Chronologie der römischen Bischöfe* (Kiel, 1869), p. 263, assigns 135 to 137 A. D. as the date. Eusebius (*Ch. Hist.*, iv, 10) gives the first year of the reign of Antoninus Pius.

³ *Acta Sanctorum* (AA.SS.), July, vol. iv, p. 358.

⁴ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 278 et seq., p. 291. He gives a summary of the archeological evidence upon which he bases his conclusions, pp. 289 et seq. Accepted also by Wieseler, *Christen.*, p. 29. Ruinart accepted them as genuine and inserted them in his *Acta. Mart. Sinc.*, p. 70, ed. 1802, p. 49.

⁵ Tillemont, *Memoires*, vol. ii, note i, on S. Symphorosa.

⁶ Overbeck, *Stud. zur Gesch. der alten Kirche*, p. 139.

⁷ Aube, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 184 et seq. So Görres, in *Zeitschrift f. wissenschaftliche Theologie*, 1878, vol. xxi, p. 48 et seq.

⁸ Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. i, p. 502.

they belong to the period of Hadrian. And even if we accept the conclusion of Lightfoot that some of the names may be those of true martyrs, still the acts as such have absolutely no claim to historical value.

Another group of martyrs consisting of Cerealis, Getulius, the husband of Symphorosa, Amantius, his brother, and Primitivus, has also been placed under Hadrian.¹ Compared with the extravagant stories of some of the other *Acta*, this account is very mild.² The *Acta* undoubtedly antedate many of the others and are much more credible, but are quite as worthless as historical evidence.³

Still another group is made up of S. Alexander, Bishop of Rome, and his companions, Hermes, Quirinus, Eventius, and Theodolus.⁴ Hermes, according to the legend, was a prefect of Rome, who had been baptized by Alexander. Quirinus held the office of tribune. The *Acta* carry their own condemnation, for they are full of misstatements and exaggerations. The failure of Irenaeus⁵ to mention such a martyrdom of Alexander, though he speaks of that of Telesphorus, is in itself convincing evidence.⁶

¹ *AA. SS.*, June, vol. ii, p. 264 *et seq.*

² Linsenmayer, *Bekämpfung des Christentums*, p. 91, suggests that they have the best claim of any to authenticity. Aube (*Hist. des pers.*, p. 289) also seems inclined to attribute some value to them. Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 226, apparently accepts them.

³ So Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. i, p. 506.

⁴ *AA. SS.*, May, vol. i, p. 371 *et seq.* Tillemont, *Mem.*, vol. ii, note ii, on S. Alexandre, places the acts before the end of the seventh century. Allard (*op. cit.*, p. 219 *et seq.*) is inclined to accept in part, at least, the tradition of their martyrdom, and cites the archeological evidence upon which he bases his opinion.

⁵ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, iii, 3, 3.

⁶ So Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. i, p. 505; Tillemont, *Mem.*, vol. ii, p. 500 *et seq.*; Aube, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 284. See Lipsius, *Zeit. f. wiss. Theol.*, 1871, p. 120 *et seq.*

Numerous other martyrdoms have been assigned to the reign of Hadrian, but none of them can be substantiated by reliable evidence. Following are some of them: S. Sophia and her virgin daughters, Pistis, Elpis, and Agape;¹ Serapia, the virgin, and her convert Sabina;² S. Hesperus and S. Zoe, and their two sons;³ Placidus and his wife Trajana, renamed Eustathius and Theopista, with their sons Agapius and Theopistus;⁴ Marie,⁵ Dionysius,⁶ Thalelaeus,⁷ besides several martyrs of Italy and Sardinia.⁸

The evidence of the *Acta* on the period of Hadrian is late and practically worthless. It is of course possible that some of the saints may have been real martyrs, but even if so there is absolutely no evidence which places them under Hadrian. As Lightfoot expresses it, Hadrian, who is represented as a ruthless assailant of the Christians and to whose reign the fourth general persecution is assigned, has come out of our investigation with comparatively clean hands.⁹ Except for a few purely local and temporary uprisings of a hostile popu-

¹Vide Allard (*op. cit.*, p. 228), who places their sepulchre on the Aurelian Way. Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 507, disposes of them rather flippantly.

²Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 231. *AA. SS.*, Aug., iv, p. 500; vide Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 506.

³Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 235; Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 507.

⁴Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 506; Aube, *op. cit.*, p. 280 *et seq.*

⁵*AA. SS.*, Nov., vol. i, p. 194. Vide Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

⁶Called in the *Acta* Dionysius Areopagite. See Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 505.

⁷Conybeare has edited these acts from the Armenian, *Monuments of Early Christ.*, p. 239 *et seq.* Vide Workman, *Pers. in the Early Ch.*, p. 219.

⁸Tillemont, *Mem.*, vol. ii, p. 228 *et seq.*; Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 506.

⁹Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 509.

lace and except for the local persecution by the Jews in the Jewish revolt,¹ the Christians appear to have enjoyed a period of peace during this reign.

There is still another point in the fifth-century tradition which is worthy of notice. According to Jerome,² this persecution was checked because of the admiration felt by everyone for the apology submitted to the emperor by Quadratus. Orosius³ also, following Jerome, gives to the apologists Quadratus and Aristides along with Granianus, the credit for having called forth the letter of Hadrian to Fundanus. This curious misconception seems to be due to the fact that Eusebius in the *Chronicon* happened to place the notice concerning the apologies just before his discussion of the letter of Granianus and the answer of Hadrian.⁴ As a matter of fact the Apology of Aristides was in reality probably addressed to Antoninus Pius⁵ and not to Hadrian at all.

¹ Orosius, *History*, vii, 13; Justin., *Apology*, i, 31; *Dialogue with Trypho*, i, 16.

² Hieronymus, *Epis.*, lxx, 4. *Vide* pt. ii, ch. v.

³ Orosius, *History*, vii, 13. Quoted in pt. ii, ch. v.

⁴ Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur* (Leipzig, 1893), vol. i, p. 95. The story of the desecration of the holy places probably also depends upon Eusebius. *Vide Vita Constantini*, iii, 26-28.

⁵ So Harnack, *Gesch. der altchrist. Lit.*, vol. i, p. 96; *Chron. der altchrist. Lit.*, vol. i, p. 271; J. R. Harris, "Apology of Aristides," in *Texts and Studies* (Cambridge, 1893), p. 13 *et seq.*; J. Geffcken, *Zwei griechische Apologeten* (Leipzig u. Berlin, 1907), p. ix. But *vide* Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church*, p. 215.

PART II
TEXTUAL

CHAPTER I

SOURCES ON THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE CHRISTIANS

THE following selections from the sources bear more or less directly upon the legal basis of the persecutions. Since completeness is out of the question, the aim has been to select essential passages which shed as much light as possible upon the different phases of the situation. At best the sources are inadequate. Trials of the Christians were of such slight consequence as to secure only the superficial notice of the non-Christian writers, and even these brief references are tainted with hatred and contempt. The Christian writers, on the other hand, with a point of view just as distorted, saw only the injustice and tyranny of their oppression. From neither the one nor the other can we glean any clear or satisfactory explanation of the early relations between the state and the hated religious sect.

The following general principle of early Roman Law, as stated by Cicero, gives us a sort of starting point. However, this applied only to citizens, and its enforcement would be the work of the administration officials. But by the time of Nero the authorities had long since permitted this principle to fall into disuse. The law stated by the jurist Paulus, who wrote near the beginning of the third century, is more directly applicable to the Christians. Such a principle would in itself be sufficient justification for suppressing the Christian assemblies.

Ciceronis De Legibus, II, 8, 19; 10, 25.

(ed. C. F. W. Mueller, 1898, *Teubner*.)

Separatim nemo habessit deos neve novos neve advenas nisi publice adscitos; privatim colunto, quos rite a patribus cultos acceperint.

Suosque deos aut novos aut alienigenas coli confusionem habet religionum et ignotas caerimonias nos¹ sacerdotibus. Nam a patribus acceptos deos ita placet coli, si huic legi paruerint ipsi patres.

CICERO, *On the Laws*, II, 8, 19; 10, 25.

Let no one have gods apart, neither new nor immigrant, unless publicly acknowledged; let them worship in private the god's cults which they have received from the fathers as proper objects of worship.

To worship their own gods, either new or foreign, brings in a confusion of religions and ceremonies unknown to our priests. For, if the fathers themselves obeyed this law, it is therefore settled that the gods accepted by the fathers are to be worshiped.

Pauli Sententiarum liber, V, 21.

(ed. P. Krüger, Berlin, 1878.)

Qui novas sectas vel ratione incognitas religiones inducunt, ex quibus animi hominum moveantur, honestiores deportantur, humiliores capite puniuntur.

PAUL, *Sentences*, V, 21.

Whoever introduces new doctrines or religious observances unknown as to their nature, by which the minds of men would be disturbed, if from the upper classes let them be banished, if from the lower classes, let them receive capital punishment.

We search the contemporary literature on the Nero-

¹ nostris, Halm, Davis.

nian episode¹ in vain to find any direct evidence on the legal basis of this repression of the Christians. The most significant reference is that of Suetonius, who groups the notice of the suppression of the Christians along with other police measures,² and hence implies that Christianity was put down as a police measure. This is entirely in accord with the statement of Tacitus,³ who gives as the ground for the persecution of Christians their hatred for the human race, and the fact that they were malefactors who were hated for their enormities.

There are no early sources on the Flavian period. Tertullian⁴ leaves the impression that there were laws against the Christians in existence which were left unenforced by Vespasian, but in all probability he was referring to such general laws as those which forbade all unauthorized religious sects. Dio,⁵ writing about 220 A. D., refers to the banishment of Domitilla on the charge of atheism, but this was not a crime at Roman Law. There is in reality no evidence which indicates that the legal status of the Christian was any different at this time from what it had been at the time of Nero.

The letter of Pliny⁶ is decisive on this point. Clearly, when this letter was written the suppression of the Christians was a police matter, though the confession that one was a Christian was quite sufficient to warrant his condemnation, not because it was a crime to be a Christian, but because the acknowledgment that one was a Christian was sufficient proof that he was guilty of all

¹ *Vide* pt. ii, ch. ii.

² Suetonius, *Nero*, 16, quoted in pt. ii, ch. ii.

³ Tacitus, *Annals*, xv, 44, quoted in pt. ii, ch. ii.

⁴ Tertullian, *Apology*, 5; *vide* pt. ii, ch. iv.

⁵ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, lxxvii, 14; *vide* pt. ii, ch. iii.

⁶ *Letters of Pliny and Trajan*, 96, 97, quoted in pt. ii, ch. iv.

crimes. The rescript of Trajan, on the other hand, practically settled the whole question. It was this rescript which inaugurated the system of which the apologists complained.

Hadrian, in turn, completed the work of Trajan.¹ He made no changes in the laws introduced by Trajan, but did introduce certain changes in procedure, applicable at least to Asia Minor.² At this time we meet a striking example of mob rule, which had all along been a potent factor.³

Once we pass the period of Trajan and Hadrian the literature upon the legal situation of the Christians becomes voluminous. In the apologetic writings of the second century there is description after description of the result of the rescripts of Trajan and Hadrian. The earliest of the apologists are the Greek philosophers, Justin Martyr and Athenagoras, Melito, Bishop of Sardis,⁴ and Tatian. Justin and Tatian were contemporaries, both writing near the middle of the second century. Melito wrote about 170 A. D., and Athenagoras seven or eight years later.

JUSTIN MARTYR,⁵ *Apology*, I, 3, 4.

But lest anyone think that this is an unreasonable and reckless utterance, we demand that the charges against the Christians⁶ be investigated, and that, if these be substantiated, they

¹ *Vide* pt. i, ch. v.

² *Vide* Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iv, 8, 9, quoted in pt. ii, ch. v.

³ *Ibid.*, iii, 33, 2, quoted in pt. ii, ch. iv.

⁴ For extracts from Melito showing the importance of false accusations and of the mob element *vide* Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iv, 26, quoted in pt. ii, chs. ii and v.

⁵ *Justini Apologia* (ed. Otto, Jena, 1876, *Corpus Apologetarum Christianorum*). There is a handy edition in the *Cambridge Patristic Texts* by A. Blunt, *The Apologies of Justin Martyr* (Cambridge, 1911).

⁶ *Cf.* *Apology*, ii, 12, quoted in pt. ii, ch. v.

be punished as they deserve. But if no one can convict us of anything, true reason forbids you, for the sake of a wicked rumor, to wrong guiltless men. . . . And those among yourselves who are accused you do not punish before they are convicted; but in our case you receive the name as proof,¹ and this although, so far as the name goes, you ought rather to punish our accusers. For we are accused of being Christians, and to hate that which is good² is unjust. Again, if anyone of the accused denies, saying he is not a Christian, you acquit him, as having no evidence against him as a wrong doer;³ but if anyone confesses, you punish him on account of this confession,⁴ though you ought to inquire into the life both of him who confesses and of him who denies, that by his deeds it may be apparent what kind of a man each is.

TATIAN,⁵ *Address to the Greeks*, 27.

For how is it not absurd that, while the robber is not to be punished for the name he bears until the truth has been accurately ascertained, yet we are hated and abused without a judicial inquiry?⁶

ATHENAGORAS,⁷ *A Plea for the Christians*, 1, 2.

But for us who are called Christians, since you have not also cared for us, but, although we commit no wrong, nay . . .

¹ ἵνα ἡμῶν διὰ τὸ ὄνομα ὡς ἐλεγχον λαμβάνετε.

² τὸ χρηστόν.

³ ὁκνῶν . . . ἀμαρτάνοντα.

⁴ Death was the penalty. Vide *Apology*, i, 11. Cf. *Apology*, ii, 2, where Justin cites cases in which Christians were punished for the mere confession of the name.

⁵ *Tatiani Oratio ad Graecos* (ed. E. Schwartz, Leipzig, 1893, *Texte und Untersuchungen*).

⁶ ἡμῶν διὰ τὸ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ὀνόματι ἀνεξετάτως μισήσασθαι.

⁷ *Athenagorae Libellus pro Christianis* (ed. E. Schwartz, Leipzig, 1891, *Text. u. Unter.*; J. Geffcken, *Zwei Griechische Apologeten* (Leipzig u. Berlin, 1907)).

are of all men most piously and righteously disposed toward God and toward your government, you allow us to be driven, harrassed and pursued,¹ the multitude making war upon us for the name alone. We have ventured to make these things known to you (and you will learn from this discourse that we suffer unjustly and contrary to all law and reason),² and we beseech you to bestow some consideration upon us also, that at length we may cease to be slaughtered at the instigation of false accusers.³ For the fine imposed by our persecutors does not aim merely at our property, nor the disgrace at our honor, nor the damage at any other of our lesser interests. . . . But, when our money fails us, they plot against our very bodies and souls, pouring upon us a multitude of accusations, of which we are guiltless even in thought, but which are appropriate to these idle praters themselves, and to all who join in with them.

- 2 If, indeed, anyone can prove that we have done illegal acts,⁴ be they small or great, we do not beg off from punishment, but are prepared to undergo the most bitter and merciless retribution. But if the accusation⁵ relates merely to a name (at any rate up to the present time the stories invented about us are the common and indiscriminating popular talk, nor has any Christian been convicted of wrong-doing⁶) it is your business, who are the greatest and most benevolent and most learned sovereigns, to remove by law this spiteful treatment, so that, as throughout the world both individuals and cities have partaken of your beneficence, we also may feel grateful to you, exulting that we are no longer the victims of false accusation.⁷ For it does not comport with your justice,

¹ ἐλαίνεσθαι καὶ φέρεσθαι καὶ διώκεσθαι.

² ἄτερ δίκης καὶ παρὰ πάντα νόμον καὶ λόγον.

³ ὑπὸ τῶν συκοφαντῶν.

⁴ καὶ εἰ μὲν τις ἡμᾶς ἐλέγχειν ἔχει . . . ἀδοκῶντας.

⁵ ἡ κατηγορία.

⁶ καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀδικῶν Χριστιανὸς ἐλήλεγκται.

⁷ συμνηνόμενοι ὅτι πεπαίμεθα συκοφαντούμενοι.

that others when charged with crimes should not be punished till they are convicted, but that in our case the name we bear should have more force than the evidence adduced on the trial,¹ when the judges, instead of inquiring whether the accused has committed any crime, vent their insults upon a name, as if that were itself a crime.² . . . What, therefore, is the equal right of all we claim for ourselves, that we shall not be hated and punished because we are called Christians (for what has the name to do with wickedness) but be tried on any charges which may be brought against us, and either be released on our disproving them, or punished if convicted of wickedness,³ not for the name (for no Christian is a bad man unless he falsely profess our doctrines), but for the illegal act which has been committed.⁴

By far the clearest statement of the general situation is to be found in the *Apology* of Tertullian. His legal training and his keen appreciation of the juristic status of the Christians make his writings by far the most important source for a determination of the legal basis of the persecutions. It must be remembered, however, that Tertullian wrote at the very end of the second century, after the development of a definite policy and a well-defined procedure for dealing with the Christians.

The following chapter of the *Apology*, which was addressed to the rulers of the Roman Empire (Romani imperii antistites⁵), explains the lack of any specific characterization of the crime of which the Christians were convicted. The apologist emphasizes again and again the anomalies in the procedure against the mem-

¹ἐφ' ἡμῶν δὲ μείζον ἰσχύειν τὸ ὄνομα τῶν ἐπὶ τῇ δίκῃ ἐλέγχων.

²ἀλλ' εἰς τὸ ὄνομα ὡς εἰς ἀδικημα ἐνυβρίζοντων.

³κολάζεσθαι τοὺς ἀλίσκομένους πονηροῦς.

⁴μη ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι . . . , ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ ἀδικήματι.

⁵Tertullian, *Apology*, i, 1.

bers of the sect, who were convicted for the name alone, or in other words, for simply *being Christians*.

Tertulliani Apologeticum, II.

(ed. G. Rauschen, Bonn, 1906, *Florilegium Patristicum*.)

- Si certum est denique, nos nocentissimos esse, cur a vobis ipsis aliter tractamur, quam pares nostri, id est ceteri nocentes, cum eiusdem noxae eadem tractatio deberet intervenire?
- 2 Quodcumque dicimur, cum alii dicuntur, et proprio et mercenario ore utuntur ad innocentiae suae commendationem; respondendi, altercandi facultas patet, quando nec liceat indefensos et inauditos omnino damnari. Sed christianis solis nihil permittitur loqui, quod causam purget, quod veritatem defendat, quod iudicem non faciat iniustum, sed illud solum expectatur, quod odio publico necessarium est: confessio
- 4 nominis, non examinatio criminis; quando, si de aliquo nocente cognoscatis, non statim confesso eo nomen homicidae vel sacrilegi vel incesti vel publici hostis, ut de nostris elogiis loquar, contenti sitis ad pronuntiandum, nisi et consequentia exigatis, qualitatem facti numerum locum tempus conscios
- 8 socios? . . . in reos maiestatis et publicos hostes omnis homo miles est: ad socios, ad conscios usque inquisitio extenditur.
- 9 Solum christianum inquiri non licet, offerri licet, quasi aliud esset actura inquisitio quam oblationem. . . .
- 10 Sed nec in illo ex forma malorum iudicandorum agitis erga nos, quod ceteris negantibus tormenta adhibetis ad confitendum, solis christianis ad negandum, cum si malum esset, nos quidem negaremus, vos vero confiteri tormentis compelleretis. . . . Quo perversius, cum praesumatis de sceleribus nostris ex nominis confessione, cogitis tormentis de confessione decedere, ut negantes nomen pariter utique negemus et scelera, de quibus ex confessione nominis praesumpseratis. . . .
- 13 Vociferatur homo: christianus sum. Quod est, dicit; tu vis audire quod non est. Veritatis extorquendae praesides de nobis solis mendacium elaboratis audire. Hoc sum, inquit, quod quaeris an sim. Quid me torques in perversum? Con-

fiteor, et torques; quid faceres, si negarem? Plane aliis negantibus non facile fidem adcommodatis: nobis, si negaverimus, statim creditis.

4 Suspecta sit vobis ista perversitas, ne qua vis lateat in occulto, quae vos adversus formam, adversus naturam iudicandi, contra ipsas quoque leges ministret. Nisi fallor enim, leges malos erui iubent, non abscondi, confessos damnari
6 praescribunt, non absolvi. . . . Christianum hominem omnium scelerum reum, deorum imperatorum legum morum naturae totius inimicum existimas¹ et cogis negare, ut absolvas, quem non poteris absolvere, nisi negaverit. . . .

8 Cum igitur in omnibus nos aliter disponitis quam ceteros nocentes, ad unum contendendo, ut de isto nomine excludamur—excludimur enim, si faciamus quae faciunt non christiani—intelligere potestis, non scelus aliquod in causa esse, sed nomen, quod quaedam ratio aemulae operationis insequitur, hoc primum agens, ut homines nolint scire pro certo quod se
9 nescire pro certo sciunt. . . . Ideo torquemur confitentes et punimur perseverantes et absolvimur negantes, quia nominis
10 proelium est. Denique quid de tabella recitatis illum christianum? cur non et homicidam? si homicida christianus? cur non et incestum vel quodcumque aliud esse nos creditis? In nobis solis pudet aut piget ipsis nominibus scelerum pronuntiare. Christianus si nullius criminis nomen est, valde ineptum, si solius nominis crimen est.

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, II.

If indeed it is a certainty that we are the most criminal of men, why are we treated by you so differently from our equals, that is from other criminals, since the same offense
2 should receive the same treatment. When others are accused as we are accused they make use both of their own and of hired lips to prove their innocence; they have full opportunity to answer and debate, since it is by no means permitted that they should be condemned undefended and without a hearing.

¹ Cf. Justin, *Apologia*, i, 3.

- 3 But the Christians alone are not permitted to say anything for the sake of disproving the case, of defending the truth, of withholding the judge from injustice, but that alone is desired which the public hatred requires—a confession of the name,
- 4 not an examination of the crime. On the other hand, if you are examining another criminal and he confesses that he bears the name of murderer or temple robber or incestuous par-
- amour or public enemy (if I may cite the charges which are made against us), are you content to proceed to sentence without ascertaining what the name implies—the character of the deed, when, where, and how often it was committed, and
- 8 the accessories and accomplices? . . . Against traitors and public enemies every man is a public officer: search is made
- 9 for accomplices and even for accessories. The Christian alone may not be sought out although he may be brought before the tribunal, as if a seeking out had any other object than an arraignment before the tribunal. . . .
- 10 But in another respect you proceed in our case contrary to the ordinary form of judicial investigation; for you torture others when they deny, to make them confess, the Christians alone you torture to make them deny, whereas, if it were an evil thing of which we were accused, we on our part should deny and you would compel us by torture to confess. . . .
- 11 Accordingly you are the more perverse. Since from the confession of the name you presume us guilty of crimes, it is the more perverse on your part to torture us to abandon our confession, so that by denying the name we may likewise deny also the crimes, which you have presumed from the confession
- 13 of the name. . . . “I am a Christian,” the man shouts. He asserts a fact; you wish to hear what is not a fact. Placed in authority to extort the truth, from us alone you strive to hear a lie. “I am,” he says, “that which you ask me if I am. Why do you torture me to pervert the truth? I confess, and you torture me; what would you do if I should deny? Assuredly you do not readily have faith in others when they deny; if we have denied you believe us at once.”
- 14 Let this perversity of yours awaken your suspicion that

there is some hidden power, which is making you its servants against the forms and the nature of justice, and even against the laws themselves. For unless I am mistaken, the laws order offenders to be sought out, not to be hidden away; they provide that those who confess shall be condemned, not acquitted. . . . You believe a Christian to be a man guilty of all crimes, an enemy of the gods, of the emperors, of the laws, of morality, and of all nature; still you compel him to deny that you may acquit him, which you could not do had he not denied. . . . Therefore, seeing that in every way you treat us differently from other criminals, all because of your struggle for a single object, that we may be deprived of our name (indeed we lose it, if we do what Christians never do), you are able to understand that there is no crime at all in the case, but a name, which is pursued on a plan in which rival tendencies are at work, the prime aim being that men should not wish to know for certain what they know for certain that they do not know. . . . Therefore, we are put to the torture if we confess, punished if we persevere, and acquitted if we deny, because the whole battle is over a name. Finally, why do you read from the docket that such a one is a Christian? Why not also read that he is a murderer, if a Christian is a murderer? Why not also read that he was guilty of incest or of whatever else you believe us guilty? In our case alone you are ashamed or too conscious of error to pronounce sentence with precise designation of our crimes. If the word *Christian* is not the name of any crime, it is indeed most absurd if there should be crime in the name alone.

The fourth chapter is the one appealed to as a proof of the existence of a definite law issued by Nero,¹ which proscribed Christianity as such. There is here no reference to the time when the laws originated. That occurs

¹ For ch. v, in which Nero is mentioned as the first persecutor, and likewise for Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicon*, ii, 29, see the following chapter.

at the beginning of the next chapter, where Tertullian explains how the senate under Tiberius refused to make the Christian religion a *religio licita*, and hence left it subject to the laws prohibiting illicit associations.¹

Tertulliani Apologeticum, IV.

- 3 Sed quoniam, cum ad omnia occurrit veritas nostra, postremo legum obstruitur auctoritas adversus eam,² ut aut nihil dicatur retractandum esse post leges, aut ingratis necessitas obsequii praeferatur veritati, de legibus prius consistam vobiscum, ut cum tutoribus legum. Iam primum, cum iure definitis dicendo: *Non licet esse vos!* et hoc sine ullo retractatu humaniore praescribitis, vim profitemini et iniquam ex arce dominationem, si ideo negatis licere, quia non vultis, non quia debuit non licere. . . . Si lex tua erravit, puto, ab homine concepta est; neque enim de caelo ruit.
- 4
- 6 Miramini hominem aut errare potuisse in lege condenda, II aut resipuisse in reprobanda? . . . Quomodo iniquas dicimus? Immo, si nomen puniunt, etiam stultas; si vero facta, cur de solo nomine puniunt facta, quae in aliis de admissio, non de nomine probata defendunt? Incestus sum; cur non requirunt? infanticida; cur non extorquent? In deos, in Caesares aliquid committo, cur non audior qui habeo quo purger?

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, IV.

- 3 But since, when our truth meets you at all points, as a last resort the authority of the laws is set up against it, so that either it is said that nothing is to be considered that lies back of the laws, or the necessity of obedience, however unpleasant, should be preferred to the truth, first in the matter of the laws
- 4 I will grapple with you as being their guardians. Now first, when you declare legally: *It is not lawful for you to exist!* and without any more humane consideration order this enforced, you display a violence and tyranny unjust in the high-

¹ Vide pt. i, ch. i; cf. ch. xxxviii, ch. xxxix, *infra*.

² Cf. *Ad Nationes*, i, 6, of which this chapter is an amplification.

est degree, if thus you declare a thing unlawful, because you do not like it, and not because it deserves to be unlawful. . . .

5 If your law has erred, I believe it is conceived by man, for it did not fall from heaven.

6 Do you wonder at man's having been able to err in forming a law, or having come to his senses in rejecting it? . . .

1 Why do we call them unjust? Nay, if they punish a name, they are even irrational; but if they punish acts, why do this on the ground of a name alone, while in the case of others they insist that these acts be proven by evidence, not by a name. I am guilty of incest, why do they not question me on this point? I am a murderer of babes, why do they not apply the torture? I am guilty of crimes against the gods, against the Caesars, why am I not heard when I am able to clear myself?

After discussing the laws, Tertullian turns to a refutation of the charges of secret and ritual crimes. Then in the following chapter he considers the charges of crimes committed in the open. But, as has already been emphasized, these are the charges of a hostile populace and not the legal accusations made in the indictments of the Christians.

Tertulliani Apologeticum, X.

Deos, inquitis, non colitis et pro imperatoribus sacrificia non penditis. Sequitur, ut eadem ratione pro aliis non sacrificemus, qua nec pro nobis ipsis, semel deos non colendo. Itaque sacrilegii et maiestatis rei convenimur. Summa haec causa, immo tota est, . . .

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, X.

"You do not worship the gods," you say, "and you do not offer sacrifices for the emperors." It follows that we do not sacrifice for others for the same reason for which we do not for ourselves, simply because we do not worship the gods. Ac-

cordingly we are charged with sacrilege and treason. This is the chief, nay the whole, charge against us.

After devoting seventeen chapters to a refutation of these accusations Tertullian turns to the other charges made against the Christians. In the course of this discussion he uses several expressions which many have believed to be the specific legal crimes for which the Christians were tried.

Tertulliani Apologeticum, XXIV.

Omnis ista confessio illorum, qua se deos negant esse quaque non alium deum respondent praeter unum, cui nos mancipamur, satis idonea est ad depellendum crimen laesae maxime Romanae religionis. Si enim non sunt dei pro certo, nec religio pro certo est; si religio non est, quia nec dei, pro certo,
 9 nec nos pro certo rei sumus laesae religionis. . . . Sed nos soli arcemur a religionis proprietate. Laedimus Romanos nec Romani habemur, quia nec Romanorum deum colimus.

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, XXIV.

This whole confession of theirs (the daemons), in which they admit they are not gods and in which they answer that there is no god save one, the God to whom we have surrendered ourselves, is quite sufficient to disprove the crime of treason particularly against the Roman religion. For if it is not certain that there are gods, it is not certain that there is a religion; if there is no certain religion, because there are no certain gods, then certainly we are not guilty of an offence
 9 against religion. . . . But we alone are restrained from having our own religion. We offend the Romans and are not given the name of Romans because we do not worship the god of the Romans.

Tertulliani Apologeticum, XXVII.

Satis haec adversus intimationem laesae divinitatis; quo non videamur laedere eam, ostendimus non esse. Igitur

- 2 provocati ad sacrificandum obstruimus gradum. . . . Sed quidam dementiam existimant, quod, cum possimus et sacrificare in praesenti et inlaesi abire manente apud animum proposito, obstinationem saluti praeferamus.

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, XXVII.

- So much for the charge of treason against divinity; since it does not seem that we can harm that which we have shown to have no existence. Therefore, called upon to sacrifice, we
2 refuse to approach. . . . But some think it insanity, that when we are able to sacrifice at once and go away unharmed, holding as before the same opinion, we prefer obstinacy to safety.

Tertulliani Apologeticum, XXVIII.

- 3 Ventum est igitur ad secundum titulum laessae augustioris maiestatis,¹ siquidem maiore formidine et callidior timiditate Caesarem observatis quam ipsum de Olympo Iovem. . . .
4 Citius denique apud vos per omnes deos quam per unum genium Caesaris peieratur.

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, XXVIII.

- 3 We come then to the second charge of treason against a majesty more august, since indeed you worship Caesar with greater reverence and with more subtle apprehension than
4 Olympian Jove himself. . . . Moreover, you take a false oath in the name of all the gods more readily than by the single genius of Caesar.

Tertulliani Apologeticum, XXXV.

- Propterea igitur publici hostes christiani, quia imperatoribus neque vanos neque mentientes neque temerarios honores dicant, . . .
5 Velim tamen in hac quoque religione secundae maiestatis, de qua in secundum sacrilegium convenimur christiani non celebrando vobiscum solemnia Caesarum, . . . fidem et veritatem vestram demonstrare, ne forte et istic deteriores chris-

¹ Cf. *Ad Nationes*, i, 17.

tianis deprehendantur qui nos nolunt Romanos haberi, sed ut hostes principum Romanorum.

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, XXXV.

For this reason then the Christians are called public enemies, that they pay no vain nor deceitful nor thoughtless honors to the emperors, . . .

- 5 However, in this reverence also to a second majesty, in regard to which the Christians are accused of a second sacrilege for not celebrating with you the festivals of the Caesars, . . . I should like to point out your own good faith and sincerity, lest by chance you, who do not wish us to be counted as Romans but as enemies of the Roman rulers, should be discovered even in this respect to be worse than the Christians.

The following chapter describes an interesting phase of the actual situation.¹

Tertulliani Apologeticum, XXXVII.

- 2 Quotiens enim in christianos desaevis, partim animis propriis, partim legibus obsequentes? Quotiens etiam praeteritis vobis suo iure nos inimicum vulgus invadit lapidibus et incendiis?

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, XXXVII.

- 2 How often do you rage against the Christians, partly because of your own inclination, partly in obedience to the laws? How often also does the hostile mob, disregarding you and taking the law into its own hands, attack us with stones and flames?

In the following quotation the writer again refers to the fact that Christianity was regarded as a *religio illicita*. It was written at a time when the law was

¹ Cf. Melito in Eusebius, *Ch. His.*, iv, 26.

being relaxed, in an effort to have the Christian religion authorized.

Tertulliani Apologeticum, XXXVIII, XXXIX.

Proinde nec paulo lenius inter licitas factiones sectam istam deputari oportebat, a qua nihil tale committitur, quale de illicitis factionibus praecavetur. Nisi fallor enim, prohibendarum factionum causa de providentia constat modestiae publicae, . . . Haec coitio christianorum merito sane illicita, si illicitis par, merito damnanda, si quis de ea queritus eo titulo, quo de factionibus querela est. . . . Cum probi, cum boni coeunt, cum pii, cum casti congregantur, non est factio dicenda, sed curia.

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, XXXVIII, XXXIX.

Accordingly, this sect ought to be considered much more leniently and given a place among the legal associations, since it does none of those things such as you guard against in the case of illegal associations. For unless I am mistaken the reason for prohibiting associations is that it is a precaution against public disturbance. . . . This organization of the Christians is of course deservedly illegal if it is like the illegal ones; it deserves to be condemned if any one complains of it on that ground upon which complaint is made of associations. . . . When the honest, when the virtuous, come together; when the pious, when the pure assemble, it should not be called an association, but a religious assembly.

The *Ad Nationes* is strikingly like the *Apology*, in fact the second is probably an expansion of the first. Accordingly, most of the ideas expressed above can also be found in the *Ad Nationes*. These short selections refer principally to procedure.

Tertulliani Ad Nationes I, 2, 3.(ed. Reifferscheid and Wissowa, Jena, 1890, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*.)

- Porro de nobis, quos atrocioribus ac pluribus criminibus deputatis, breviora ac leviora elogia conficitis . . . Porro sententiae vestrae nihil nisi Christianum confessum notant. nullum criminis nomen exstat, nisi nominis crimen est. haec etenim est revera ratio totius odii adversus nos. . . et utique non gladio aut cruce aut bestiis punienda sunt nomina.

TERTULLIAN, *To the Nations*, I, 2, 3.

- Moreover, in our case, though you consider us guilty of more horrible and more numerous crimes (than the murderer), you prepare shorter and less weighty indictments. . . .
- 3 Nevertheless your judgments contain no statement except that one has confessed himself a Christian; no crime is named unless it is the crime of the name. This is in truth the reason for all of the hatred felt toward us. . . . And certainly names ought not to be punished by the sword or the cross or by wild beasts.

Minucius was a contemporary of Tertullian, and like him a lawyer, though it still remains an open question as to whether he wrote before or after Tertullian. The *Octavius* is an almost classical defense of the Christian faith in the form of a dialogue between a Christian and a non-Christian. The following passage is the denunciation of the Christians by Caecilius, the non-Christian.

Minucii Felicis Octavius, 8.(ed. H. Boenig, 1903, *Teubner*.)

- 3 [Quid] homines, inquam, deploratae, illicitae ac desperatae
- 4 factionis grassari in deos non ingemescendum est? qui de ultima faece collectis imperitioribus et mulieribus credulis sexus sui facilitate labentibus plebem profanae coniurationis

instituunt, quae nocturnis congregationibus et ieiuniis, sollemnibus et inhumanis cibis non sacro quodam, sed piaculo foederatur, latebrosa et lucifuga natio, in publicum muta, in angulis garrula: templa ut busta despiciunt, deos despuunt, rident sacra, miserentur (misereri si fas est) sacerdotum, honores et purpuras reiciunt ipsi seminudi.

MINUCIUS FELIX, *Octavius*, 8.

- 3 Why is it not, I say, a lamentable thing that men of a de-
plorable, unauthorized, and desperate faction should rage
4 against the gods? The most ignorant men, gathered in from
the lowest dregs of society, together with credulous women,
who by the yielding nature of their sex easily go astray, form
the rank and file of a profane conspiracy, which is bound to-
gether by nightly meetings and solemn fasts and inhuman
food, not by any sacred rite, but by that which requires ex-
piation. They are a skulking and a light-shunning people,
silent in public but garrulous in corners. They despise the
temples as they do pyres, they spit upon the gods, they ridi-
cule the sacred rites, they feel compassion for the priests (if
compassion is the word), they scorn public office and purple
attire, themselves going half naked.

In each of the two following selections there is a substantial statement of the law as Callewaert has expressed it, *Non licet esse Christianos*. But both of them are late; Origen's *Homily* belongs to the second quarter of the third century, while the *Acta*, which refer to the period of Commodus, are certainly not much earlier if in fact they are not later.¹ The decree of the senate referred to in the *Acta* is probably a decree which had to do directly with Apollonius, who was himself a senator, and did not apply to the Christian sect in general.

¹Vide E. Klette, "Der Process und die Acta S. Apollonius" (Leipzig, 1897), in *Texte u. Untersuchungen*, vol. xv; Hardy, *op cit.*, p. 155 et seq.; Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, vol. i, p. 463 et seq.

Origenis in Librum Jesu Nave Homilia, IX, 10.

(ed. Delarue in Migne, *Patrologiae Graecae*, 12, 1857.)

Convenerunt enim reges terrae, senatus, populusque et principes Romani, ut expugnarent nomen Jesu et Israel simul. Decreverunt enim legibus suis, ut non sint Christiani. Omnis civitas, omnis ordo Christianorum nomen impugnat.

ORIGEN, *Homily on Joshua, IX, 10.*

For the rulers of the earth, the senate, the people, and the Roman emperors have taken counsel together to destroy by force at once the name of Jesus and of Israel. For they have decreed in their laws, that Christians are not to exist. The whole state, every class of society assails the name of the Christians.

Acta S. Apollonii, § 23.

(ed. E. Klette, 1897, *Texte u. Untersuchungen.*)

Περέννιος ὁ ἀνθύπατος εἶπεν· Ἀπολλῶ, τὸ δόγμα τῆς συγκλήτου ἐστὶν χριστιανὸς μὴ εἶναι.

Acts of Apollonius, 23.

Perennius the prefect said, "Apollonius, the decree of the senate is that Christians shall not exist."

CHAPTER II

SOURCES FOR THE NERONIAN PERSECUTION

THE earliest reference to the persecution of Nero is to be found in the so-called *First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*. This letter was sent in the name of the community at Rome, but it is generally admitted that Clement was the real author. Opinions differ somewhat as to the date of writing, though the great weight of authority is for about 95 A. D. Its genuineness is practically unquestioned.¹

Clementis Romani ad Corinthios, I, 5, 6, 7.

(ed. J. B. Lightfoot, London, 1890, *Apostolic Fathers*.)

V. 'Αλλ' ἵνα τῶν ἀρχαίων ὑποδειγμάτων πανσώμεθα, ἔλθωμεν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐγγίστα γενόμενους ἀθλητάς· λάβωμεν τῆς γενεᾶς ἡμῶν τὰ γενναῖα ὑποδείγματα. Διὰ ζῆλον καὶ φθόνον οἱ μέγιστοι καὶ δικαιοτάτοι στίλοι ἐδιώχθησαν καὶ ἕως θανάτου ἤθλησαν. Δάβωμεν πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἡμῶν τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς ἀποστόλους· Πέτρον, ὃς διὰ ζῆλον ἀδικον οὐχ ἓνα οὐδὲ δύο ἀλλὰ πλείονας ὑπήνεγκεν πόνους, καὶ οὕτω μαρτυρήσας ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον τόπον τῆς δόξης. διὰ ζῆλον καὶ ἔριν Παῦλος ὑπομονῆς βραβεῖον ὑπέδειξεν, ἐπτάκις δεσμὰ φορέσας, φυγαδευθεὶς, λιθασθεὶς, κῆρυξ γενόμενος ἐν τε τῇ ἀνατολῇ καὶ ἐν τῇ δύσει, τὸ γενναῖον τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ κλέος ἔλαβεν, δικαιοσύνην διδάξας ὅλον τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ τέρμα τῆς δόσεως ἑλθὼν· καὶ μαρτυρήσας ἐπὶ τῶν ἡγουμένων, οὕτως ἀπηλλάγη τοῦ κόσμου καὶ εἰς τὸν ἅγιον τόπον ἐπορεύθη, ὑπομονῆς γενόμενος μέγιστος ὑπογραμμός.

VI. Τοῦτοις τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ὁσῶς πολιτευσαμένοις συνηθροίσθη πολὺ πλῆθος ἐκλεκτῶν, οἵτινες πολλαῖς αἰκίαις καὶ βασάνοις, διὰ ζῆλος παθόντες, ὑπόδειγμα κάλλιστον ἐγένοντο ἐν ἡμῖν. διὰ ζῆλος διωχθεῖσαι γυναῖκες, Δαναίδες καὶ Δίρκαι,² αἰκίσματα δευνὰ καὶ ἀνύσια παθοῦσαι, ἐπὶ τὸν τῆς πίστεως βέβαιον δρόμον κατήντησαν, καὶ ἔλαβον γέρας γενναῖον αἱ ἀσθενεῖς τῷ σώματι. ζῆλος ἀπηλλοτρίωσεν γαμετὰς ἀνδρῶν καὶ ἡλλοίωσεν τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀδάμ, τοῦτο νῦν ὁσοῦν ἐκ τῶν ὁστέων μου καὶ σὰρξ ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς μου. ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις πόλεις μεγάλας κατέστρεψεν καὶ ἔθνη μεγάλη ἐξερρίζωσεν.

VII. Ταῦτα, ἀγαπητοί, οὐ μόνον ὑμᾶς νοουθετοῦντες ἐπιστέλλομεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἑαυτοὺς ὑπομνήσκοντες· ἐν γὰρ τῷ αὐτῷ ἔσμεν σκάμματι, καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς ἡμῖν ἄγων ἐπικείται.

¹ Vide Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, iii, 3, 3. Lightfoot, *S. Clement of Rome*, vol. i, p. 346; H. Jordan, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literature* (Leipzig, 1911), p. 134.

² Lightfoot still favors the emendation of his first edition,—*γυναῖκες, νεάνιδες, παιδίσκαι*.

CLEMENT OF ROME, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, V, VI, VII.

V But to bring to an end the time-honored examples, let us come to the very recent champions; let us take the noble examples of our own generation. On account of envy and jealousy the greatest and most righteous pillars of the Church were persecuted, and contended even unto death. Let us set before our eyes the holy Apostles: Peter, who because of unjust jealousy endured not one or two but many sufferings, and having thus been a witness went to the place of glory due to him. On account of envy and contention Paul by his example pointed out the reward of patience. After he had been seven times in bonds, driven into exile, and stoned, and after he had taught in the East and in the West, he gained the glory due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world and having come to the extreme West. And when he had suffered martyrdom under the rulers, he accordingly departed from the world and went to the holy place, a supreme example of patient endurance.

VI Unto these men of holy lives was gathered a great multitude of the elect, who having through envy endured many outrages and torments, were a most noble example among us. The women having been persecuted because of envy, having suffered cruel and unholy tortures as Danaids and Dircae,¹ safely reached the goal of faith, and though weak in body received a noble reward. Envy has alienated women from their husbands and has changed the saying of our father Adam, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Envy and strife have overthrown great cities, and uprooted great nations.

VII These things, beloved ones, we write not only to admonish you, but also to remind ourselves, for we are in the same arena, and the same conflict is imposed upon us.

¹ Following Lightfoot's suggested emendation the translation would be, "women, tender maidens, even slave-girls."

The next reference to the Neronian persecution is that in the *Annals* of Tacitus, published between 115 and 117 A. D.,¹ a half-century after this so-called persecution. The earlier doubts as to the genuineness of this chapter are now entirely silenced.² Just what sources Tacitus used cannot be determined with accuracy, and it is a difficult matter indeed to determine the value of his account. As a youth he may have witnessed some of the events described in this chapter. But writing fifty years later he would find it difficult to divest himself of the knowledge of the Christians gained by his additional experience. He should have been fairly well acquainted with them for just before he completed the *Annals* he had held the pro-consulship of Asia, the stronghold of Christianity.³

By some his account of the persecution is regarded as the all-important source; by others the accuracy is seriously questioned.⁴ The peculiar rhetorical style of Tacitus, especially his attempts at brevity, accounts for some of the difficulties, but the chief difficulty arises in attempting to reconcile his explanation of the cause of the persecution with the statements in the other sources.

Cornelii Taciti Ab Excessu Divi Augusti, XV, 44.

(ed. C. Halm, 1902, Teubner.)

Et haec quidem humanis consiliis providebantur. mox petita dis piacula aditique Sibyllae libri, ex quibus supplicatum Vol-

¹ Teuffel, *History of Roman Literature* (English translation from the fifth German edition, London, 1902), vol. ii, § 338.

² Hochart (*Études au sujet de la persécution des Chrétiens sous Néron*, Paris, 1885), declared that the entire chapter was an interpolation of the middle ages. Refuted by C. Douais, in *Rev. des ques. hist.*, 1885, vol. xxxviii, pp. 337-397. Vide Arnold, *Die neron. christenverfolgung*, pp. 4 et seq.

³ Hardy, *Christianity and the Rom. Govt.*, 2nd ed., p. 45.

⁴ Vide *supra*, p. 45.

cano et Cereri Proserpinaeque, ac propitiata Iuno per matronas, primum in Capitolio, deinde apud proximum mare, unde hausta aqua templum et simulacrum deae perspersum est; et sellisternia ac pervigilia celebravere feminae, quibus mariti erant. sed non ope humana, non largitionibus principis aut deum placamentis decedebat infamia, quin iussum incendium crederetur. ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit, quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat. auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat; repressaque in praesens exitiabilis superstitio rursum erumpebat, non modo per Iudaeam, originem eius mali, sed per urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocita aut pudenda confluent celebranturque. igitur primum correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens haud proinde in crimine incendii quam odio humani generis convicti¹ sunt. et pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergis contexti laniatu canum interirent,² multi crucibus adfixi aut flamma usti, aliique, ubi defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur. hortos suos ei spectaculo Nero obtulerat et circense ludicrum edebat, habitu aurigae permixtus plebi vel curriculo insistens. unde quamquam adversus sontes et novissima exempla meritis miseratio oriebatur, tamquam non utilitate publica, sed in saevitiam unius absumerentur.

TACITUS, *Annals*, XV, 44.

Such things indeed were provided by human wisdom. Soon means of propitiating the gods were sought for and the Sibylline books were consulted. As a result prayers were offered to Vulcan, to Ceres, and to Proserpina, and Juno was propitiated by the matrons, first in the temple of Jupiter, then on the neighboring sea-coast, whence water was brought to sprinkle the shrine and image of the goddess. Also sacred

¹ *Codex Medicus* gives coniuncti.

² interirent . . . ubi (ed. Furneaux, 1907, gives,—interirent, aut crucibus adfixi aut flammandi, atque, ubi).

banquets and vigils were celebrated by the married women. But the belief that the fire was the result of an order yielded neither to human effort, nor to the lavish gifts of the emperor, nor even to the propitiations of the gods. Therefore, to check this rumor Nero substituted as culprits and afflicted with the most exquisite tortures those who were called Christians by the mob and were hated for their enormities. Christ, from whom the name originated, had been crucified by the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. Though checked for the time this pernicious superstition again broke out, not only in Judea, where the evil originated, but even in the city, where all things atrocious and shameful from every part of the world come together and flourish. Therefore, first those who confessed were arrested, then from their disclosures a great multitude was convicted, not so much for the crime of incendiarism, as for their hatred for mankind. Mockery was added as they perished, for some, covered with the skins of wild beasts, were mangled by dogs, many were crucified or given to the flames,¹ still others were used as a nightly illumination after the daylight had faded. Nero had offered his gardens for this spectacle, and was giving games fit for the circus, where in the dress of a charioteer he mingled with the people or else stood on high in his chariot. Therefore, although they were malefactors who deserved the most severe punishment, a feeling of pity arose, since they were being put to death not for the public welfare but to satisfy the rage of one person.

A short but very important note concerning the Christians appears also in Suetonius' life of Nero, which was written very shortly after the *Annals*, that is to say, about 120 A. D. The entire chapter is quoted here, because the note without the context would lose its significance. In a later chapter² and in an entirely different connection he describes the great fire under Nero.

¹ Cf., Tertullian, *Apology*, 12.

² Ch. xxxviii.

This work is "drawn from good sources, with faithful industry and intelligent judgment, and furnishes rich materials in a concise form and a simple, appropriate style."¹

C. Suetonii De Vita Caesarum, Nero, 16.

(ed. M. Ihm, 1908, *Teubner*.)

Formam aedificiorum urbis novam excogitavit et ut ante insulas ac domos porticus essent, de quarum solariis incendia arcerentur; easque sumptu suo extruxit. destinarat etiam Ostia tenus moenia promovere atque inde fossa mare veteri urbi inducere.

- 2 Multa sub eo et animadversa severe et coercita nec minus instituta: adhibitum sumptibus modus; publicae cenae ad sportulas redactae; interdictum ne quid in popinis cocti praeter legumina aut holera veniret, cum antea nullum non obsonii genus proponeretur; afflicti suppliciis Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novae ac maleficae; vetiti quadrigariorum lusus, quibus inveterata licentia passim vagantibus fallere ac furari per iocum ius erat; pantomimorum factiones cum ipsis simul relegatae;

SUETONIUS, *Lives of the Caesars, Nero, 16.*

He devised a new form of buildings in the city, in order that there should be porches before the tenements and the houses, from the tops of which fires might be prevented from spreading. These he built at his own expense. He also resolved to extend the walls of the city as far as Ostia and from there to bring the sea into the old city by means of a canal.

- 2 In his reign many things were severely punished and repressed, and many new things instituted. A limit was made to extravagance. Public dinners were reduced to the measure of a client's dole. Eating houses were forbidden to have any cooked foods save leguminous plants and vegetables, although formerly all kinds of dishes were

¹ Teuffel, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, § 347.

offered. The Christians, a class of people of a new and mischievous superstition, were severely punished. The games of the charioteers were interdicted, since they had long assumed the license of wandering hither and thither, making it a jest to cheat and pilfer. The factions of the pantomime players were banished along with the players themselves. . . .

The most disputed question in the whole history of the early persecutions is that concerning the application of *First Peter* to the Neronian period. Where there is a possibility for such a wide difference of opinion it is of course impossible to draw any satisfactory conclusions whatever. Conservative scholarship still maintains that it was written at Rome by Peter around the year 64 A. D.¹ Ramsay, who believes that Peter was the author, places it as late as 80.² Harnack, who rejects the Petrine authorship, places it between 83-93 A. D., but admits that it may have been a decade or two earlier.³ McGiffert places it about 90 A. D., and suggests Barnabas as the author.⁴ A large number of scholars place it under Hadrian, largely because of the reference to persecution for the name.⁵ Personally I do not think that this colorless reference to persecution throughout the world has any connection whatever with the Neronian episode at Rome.

¹ Vide T. Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Translated from the 3rd German ed., Edinburgh, 1909), vol. ii, pp. 158 *et seq.*, pp. 173 *et seq.*

² Ramsay, *Ch. in the Rom. Emp.*, pp. 279 *et seq.*

³ Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur* (Leipzig, 1897), vol. i, p. 454. Vide also Schoenaich, *D. ner. Christenverfolgung*, p. 16.

⁴ A. C. McGiffert, *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age* (New York, 1900), p. 599.

⁵ Vide F. H. Chase, "Peter First Epistle of," in Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible* (1900), vol. iii, p. 796.

First Peter. (Revised Version.)

- I I Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect who are so-
 11 journers of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia,
 12 Asia, and Bithynia,
- 12 II having your behavior seemly amongst the Gentiles; that,
 wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by
 your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day
 of visitation.
- 13 Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake:
 14 whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as
 sent by him for vengeance on evil doers and for praise to them
 that do well. For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye
 should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:
- 15 III but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: *being* ready
 always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason
 concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and
 16 fear: having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken
 against, they may be put to shame who revile your good man-
 ner of life in Christ.
- 12 IV Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial
 among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though
 13 a strange thing happened unto you: but insomuch as ye are
 partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation
 14 of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. If ye are
 reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are ye*; because the
 15 *Spirit* of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you. For
 let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an
 16 evil-doer, or as a medler in other men's matters: but if *a man*
suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him
 glorify God in this name.
- 8 V Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a
 roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
 9 whom withstand steadfast in your faith, knowing that the
 same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in
 the world.¹

¹ A handy edition of the text by E. Nestle, *Novum Testamentum
 Græce et Latine* (Stuttgart, 1906).

The *Ascension of Isaiah*¹ is a composite work, some of the parts of which date back to the first century. This selection probably belongs to the latter part of the first century. The *one* referred to must be Peter, since Paul was not included as one of the Apostles till half a century later. Isaiah is the speaker. This is perhaps the earliest reference to the persecution under Nero and to the martyrdom of St. Peter. The following is a translation from the Ethiopic by R. H. Charles. He also gives a Greek recension of this chapter.

The Ascension of Isaiah, IV, 1, 2, 3.

(ed. R. H. Charles, 1900.)

IV. 1. And now Hezekiah and Jôsâb my son, these are the days of the completion of the world. 2. After it is consummated, Beliar the great ruler, the king of this world, will descend, who hath ruled it since it came into being; yea, he will descend from his firmament in the likeness of a man, a lawless king, the slayer of his mother: who himself (even) this king 3. will persecute the plant which the Twelve Apostles of the Beloved have planted. Of the Twelve one will be delivered into his hands.

A short quotation made by Eusebius from the *Apology* of Melito of Sardis also has to do with this problem. This apology was addressed to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius some time between 161 and 180 A. D. Jerome,² in his version of Eusebius' *Chronicon*, assigns it to the tenth year of his reign, that is to 170 A. D., but this date is by no means

¹ See the Introduction to R. H. Charles, *The Ascension of Isaiah* (London, 1900); E. Tisserant, *Ascension d'Isaïe* (Paris, 1900), p. 117, pp. 42 *et seq.*, p. 60.

² Eusebi, *Chronicorum Canonum quae supersunt* (ed. A. Schoene, Berlin, 1866), Olymp. 237.

conclusive. The importance of this chapter has been especially emphasized by Klette.¹

Eusebii Ecclesiasticae Historiae liber, IV, 26, 9.

(ed. Eduard Schwartz,² Leipzig, 1903.)

Quoted from the *Apology* of Melito of Sardis.

μόνοι πάντων, ἀναπεισθέντες ἰπὸ τινων βασκάνων ἀνθρώπων, τὸν καθ' ἡμᾶς ἐν διαβολῇ καταστήσαι λόγον ἠθέλησαν Νέρων καὶ Δομετιανός, ἀφ' ὧν καὶ τὸ τῆς συκοφαντίας ἀλόγῳ συνηθεία περὶ τοὺς τοιοῦτους ῥυῆναι συμβέβηκεν ψεύδος.

EUSEBIUS, *Church History*, IV, 26, 9.

Melito's *Apology*.

"Nero and Domitian alone, persuaded by certain malicious slanderers, have wished to falsely accuse our doctrine, from whom also it has come to pass because of this absurd custom of false accusation that falsehood has become current against the Christians."

Tertullian has aptly been designated as the Carthaginian lawyer-priest. His juristic training has left its impress on his legalistic method of reasoning. His ideas are powerfully expressed and denote a remarkable personality. The *Apology* is a masterful defense of the Christians against the false attacks of the pagans. The dates assigned for the *Apology* vary, but 197 A. D., or at least not later than 200 A. D., seems the most acceptable. About 203 A. D. Tertullian became a Montanist. The *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* belongs to the pre-Montanist period as does probably the *Ad Nationes*. *Scorpiace* belongs to the period after 203.

¹ T. Klette, *Die Christenkatastrophe unter Nero*, pp. 18 et seq.

² *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*.

Tertulliani Apologeticum, V.

(ed. G. Rauschen, Bonn, 1906.)

- 3 Consulite commentarios vestros, illic reperietis primum Neronem in hanc sectam cum maxime Romae orientem Caesariano gladio ferocisse. Tali dedicatore damnationis nostrae etiam gloriamur. Qui enim scit illum, intellegere potest non nisi
- 4 grande aliquod bonum a Nerone damnatum. Temptaverat et Domitianus, portio Neronis de crudelitate; sed qua et homo, facile coeptum repressit, restitutis etiam quos relegaverat. Tales semper nobis insecutores iniusti inpii turpes, quos et ipsi damnare consuestis, a quibus damnatos restituere soliti estis.

TERTULLIAN, *Apology, V.*

- 3 Consult your histories, there you will find that Nero was the first to rage with the imperial sword against this sect which was then rising especially at Rome. We glory especially in having such a one the author of our condemnation. For whoever knows him can understand that nothing was condemned
- 4 by Nero unless it was of superior excellence. Domitian, also, a companion to Nero in cruelty, started a persecution, but since he was to a certain extent human, he quickly put a stop to what he had begun, even restoring those whom he had sent into exile. Such men as these have always been our persecutors, oppressive, irreverent, infamous, men whom you yourselves have always condemned, the victims of whose condemnation you have been wont to restore to their former condition.

Tertulliani Ad Nationes, liber I, 7.(ed. Reifferscheid et Wissowa, 1890. *Corp. Script. Eccl. Lat.*)

Principe Augusto nomen hoc ortum est, Tiberio disciplina eius inluxit, sub Nerone damnatio invaluit, ut iam hinc de persona persecutoris ponderetis: si pius ille princeps, impii Christiani, si iustus, si castus, iniusti et incesti Christiani, si non hostis publicus, nos publici hostes; quales simus, damnator ipse demonstravit, utique aemula sibi puniens. et tamen permansit erasis omnibus hoc solum institutum Neronianum, iustum denique ut dissimile sui auctoris.

TERTULLIAN, *To the Nations*, I, 7.

This name of ours originated in the reign of Augustus, its teachings began to shed light in the time of Tiberius, condemnation grew strong under Nero, so that from this point you may ponder on the character of its persecutor. If that prince was a pious man, the Christians are impious; if he was just and pure, the Christians are unjust and impure; if he was not a public enemy, then we are public enemies. Of what sort we are, our persecutor himself has shown, since he punished only what was discordant with himself. And although all other doings of Nero have been wiped out, this one thing has remained settled by Nero's procedure,—that we may see what is just by considering what is unlike the author of its persecution.¹

TERTULLIAN, *Remedy for the Scorpion's Sting*,² 15.

We read the lives of the Caesars: Nero was the first to stain with blood the faith then rising at Rome. Then was Peter girded by another, when he was fastened to the cross. Then did Paul obtain the birth suited to a Roman, when there he was born again by the nobility of martyrdom.

TERTULLIAN, *The Prescription against Heretics*,³ 36.

But if you adjoin Italy, you have Rome from whence comes to us also the authority (of the apostles). How fortunate is that church, for which the apostles poured forth the whole doctrine along with their blood, where Peter endured a suffering like his Master's; where Paul was crowned by a death

¹ This passage presents considerable difficulty and has been variously interpreted. Another rendering might be: And although . . . wiped out, this one alone has endured, a persecution of the just indeed since they are unlike the author of their persecution.

² *Tertulliani Scorpiace* (ed. Reifferscheid et Wissowa, Vienna, 1890, C. S. E. L.).

³ *Tertulliani De praescriptione haereticorum* (ed. E. Preuschen in *Sammlung ausgewählter kirchen-und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellen-schriften*, Leipzig, 1892).

like John's; where the apostle John was plunged, unhurt, into burning oil, and then sent to his island exile.

Tertulliani Apologeticum, 21.

- 25 Discipuli vero diffusi per orbem ex praecepto magistri dei paruerunt, qui et ipsi a Iudaeis insequentibus multa perpassi utique pro fiducia veritatis libenter Romae postremo per Neronis saevitiam sanguinem christianum seminaverunt.

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, 21.

- 25 The disciples also, following the bidding of the Master, scattered over the earth, and after they had endured with patience many persecutions from the Jews even with a cheerful heart, since they were confident of the truth, at last through the cruelty of Nero they sowed the seed of Christian blood at Rome.

The *De mortibus persecutorum* was written between 313 and 317 A. D., but it remains an open question whether or not Lactantius was the author. Many critics ascribe the work to an unknown Lucius Caecilius. It appeared in none of the earlier editions of Lactantius, but was published from the one remaining manuscript in 1679. The general nature of the work is determined by the writer's bitter hatred of the persecutors.

LACTANTIUS, *On the Manner in which the Persecutors died*,¹ 2.

And now while Nero was ruling, Peter came to Rome, and after he had performed certain miracles through the power of God committed to him, he turned many to righteousness and established a faithful and enduring sanctuary unto God. When these things were brought to Nero's attention and when he noticed that not only at Rome but everywhere a great mul-

¹ *Lactantii De mortibus persecutorum*, 2 (ed. S. Brandt, 1893, Edited as *Lucii Caecilii de mortibus persecutorum liber vulgo Lactantio tributus*. C. S. E. L.).

titude daily broke away from the worship of idols and condemning their old religion went over to the new, since he was an execrable and wicked tyrant, he sprang forward to destroy the heavenly sanctuary and to extirpate righteousness. He first of all persecuted the servants of God; he crucified Peter and put Paul to death. But he was not left unpunished. For God beheld the affliction of his people. Therefore, deprived of power and hurled from the height of authority, the powerless tyrant suddenly disappeared, so that even the burial place of so noxious a beast was nowhere to be seen.

The *Church History* of Eusebius was completed about 324.¹ Even though it was written so long after some of the events narrated, it is invaluable for the reason that the writer used so many sources which are now lost. He used his material, moreover, with considerable care and judgment. Both the *History* and the *Chronicle* are perfect storehouses of material. Caius, whose history is quoted here, wrote at the beginning of the third century; Dionysius,² bishop of Corinth, lived during the latter part of the second century.

EUSEBIUS, *Church History*,³ III, I, 2.

Peter seems to have preached to the Jews of the dispersion in Pontus and Galatia and Bithynia and Cappadocia and in Asia. And finally, after he had come to Rome, he was crucified head downwards,⁴ as he himself thought it fit that he should die. What needs to be said concerning Paul who preached the glad tidings of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and who later suffered martyrdom at Rome at the hands

¹ See McGiffert in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, vol. i, pp. 45-56.

² See Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iv, 22.

³ *Eusebii Ecclesiasticae Historiae libri* (ed. E. Schwartz, *Eusebius Werke, Die Kirchengeschichte*, Leipzig, 1903, G. C. S.).

⁴ ἀνεσκολοπίσθη κατὰ κεφαλῆς.

of Nero? These things are mentioned by Origen in the third book of his Commentaries on Genesis.

EUSEBIUS, *Church History*,¹ II, 25.

When the government of Nero was now firmly established, he began to plunge into unholy pursuits, and armed himself even against the religion of the God of the universe. . . . But with all these things this particular in the catalogue of his crimes was still wanting, that he was the first of the emperors who showed himself an enemy of the divine religion. The Roman Tertullian is likewise a witness of this. . . .

Thus publicly announcing himself as the first among God's chief enemies, he was led on to the slaughter of the apostles. It is, therefore, recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was crucified under Nero. This account of Peter and Paul is substantiated by the fact that their names are preserved in the cemeteries of that place even to the present day. It is confirmed likewise by Caius, a member of the Church, who arose under Zephyrinus, bishop of Rome. He in a published disputation with Proclus, the leader of the Phrygian heresy, speaks as follows concerning the places where the sacred corpses of the aforesaid apostles are laid: "But I can show the trophies of the apostles.² For if you will go to the Vatican or to the Ostian way, you will find the trophies of those who laid the foundations of this church."

And that they both suffered martyrdom at the same time is stated by Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, in his epistle to the Romans, in the following words: "You have thus by such an admonition bound together the planting of Peter and of Paul at Rome and Corinth. For both of them planted and likewise taught us in our Corinth. And they taught together in a like manner in Italy, and suffered martyrdom at the same

¹ Translation by A. C. McGiffert in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, vol. i. The best edition of the original is that of E. Schwartz, *op. cit.*

² τὰ τρόπαια τῶν ἀποστόλων.

time.”¹ I have quoted these things in order that the truth of the history might be still more confirmed.

Jerome's version of the *Chronicle* of Eusebius belongs to the very end of the fourth century. He adds nothing to the sources already quoted, but his point of view is significant as representing the tradition of the Western Church in the fourth century.

Eusebi Chronicorum Canonum quae supersunt, Versio Hieronymi, Olymp., 211.

(ed. A. Schoene, Berlin, 1866.)

Primus Nero super omnia scelera sua etiam persecutionem in Christianos facit in qua Petrus et Paulus gloriose Romae obcubuerunt.

JEROME, *Version of Eusebius' Chronicle*, Olympiad, 211.

Nero over and above all his other crimes first instituted a persecution against the Christians in which Peter and Paul gloriously met their death at Rome.

The history of Sulpicius Severus belongs to the early part of the fifth century, probably about 403. He used the best sources with some historical discrimination.² His style has won for him the surname of the Christian Sallust. The first part of chapter twenty-nine is practically a reproduction of Tacitus. The latter part, which is independent of Tacitus, has been regarded very differently by different writers.³ It is perhaps significant, in this connection, that

¹ ἑμαρτήρησαν κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν καιρὸν.

² Vide J. Bernays, "Ueber die Chronik des Sulpicius Severus," in *Jahresberichte der judisch-theologischen Seminar*, Breslau, 1861.

³ For example, Allard and Callewaert base their theory of an edict largely upon this statement; Vide pt. i, ch. i, Ramsay (*op. cit.*, pp. 243

Severus was a distinguished jurisconsult. The text of the *Chronicon* rests on a single eleventh century manuscript, now in the Vatican.

Sulpicii Severi Chronicorum liber, II, 28, 29.

(ed. C. Halm, Vienna, 1866, C. S. E. L.)

Hic [Nero] primus Christianum nomen tollere aggressus est: quippe semper inimica virtutibus vitia sunt et optimi quique ab improbis quasi exprobrantes aspiciuntur. namque eo tempore divina apud urbem religio invaluerat, Petro ibi episcopatum gerente et Paulo, posteaquam ab iniusto praesidis iudicio Caesarem appellaverat, Romam deducto: ad quem tum audiendum plures conveniebant, qui veritate intellecta virtutibusque Apostolorum, quas tum crebro ediderant, permoti ad cultum Dei se conferebant. . . .

29

Interea abundante iam Christianorum multitudine accidit ut Roma incendio conflagraret, Nerone apud Antium constituto. sed opinio omnium invidiam incendii in principem retorquebat, credebaturque imperator gloriam innovandae urbis quaesisse. neque ulla re Nero efficiebat, quin ab eo iussum incendium putaretur. igitur vertit invidiam in Christianos, actaeque in innoxios crudelissimae quaestiones: quin et novae mortes excogitatae, ut ferarum tergis contacti laniatu canum interirent, multi crucibus affixi aut flamma usti, plerique in id reservati, ut cum defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur. hoc initio in Christianos saeviri coeptum. post etiam datis legibus religio vetabatur, palamque edictis propositis Christianum esse non licebat. tum Paulus ac Petrus capitis damnati: quorum uni cervix gladio desecta, Petrus in crucem sublatus est.

et seq.), holds that it is a mere amplification of Suetonius possessing no authority, or else it refers to the action of subsequent emperors. He inclines to the latter view.

SULPICIUS SEVERUS, *Sacred History*, II, 28, 29.

He (Nero) first attempted to destroy the name of Christian, since vices are always hostile to virtue and since the best men are regarded by the wicked as a reproach to themselves. For at that time the divine religion had become strong throughout the city. Peter was bishop there and Paul had been brought to Rome after he had appealed to Ceasar from the unjust decision of the governor. After this many kept coming together to hear Paul, and they, moved by the truth which they came to understand and by the good works of the Apostles which they performed again and again, turned to the worship of God. . . .

- 29 In the meantime, when the number of the Christians had become very large, it happened that Rome was consumed by fire, Nero at the time being at Antium. But the opinion of all cast the odium of causing the fire upon the prince, and it was believed that the emperor had sought the glory of rebuilding the city. Nor did Nero bring it about in any way, that it should be believed that the fire had not been caused by his orders. Therefore he turned the odium against the Christians, and the cruelest tortures were inflicted upon the innocent. Nay, even new kinds of death were contrived, so that covered with the skins of wild beasts they were torn by dogs; many were affixed to crosses or consumed by the flames, and many were saved so that when daylight had faded, they might be burned to serve as a nightly illumination. With this beginning started the violent treatment of the Christians. Afterwards the religion was forbidden by laws which were enacted, and Christianity was rendered illegal by published edicts. At this time Paul and Peter were condemned to death, the former was beheaded, while Peter suffered on the cross.

The history of Orosius, written to vindicate and glorify the church, belongs to the first quarter of the fifth century. His statement concerning the extent of the persecution is of little value, unsupported as it is by other authorities.

The work is full of historical inaccuracies. This uncritical miscellany was a favorite text-book of universal history during the middle ages.

Orosii Historiarum liber VII, 7.

(ed. Zangemeister, 1889, *Teubner*.)

Nam primus Romae Christianos suppliciis et mortibus affecit ac per omnes provincias pari persecutione excruciaci imperavit ipsumque nomen extirpare conatus beatissimos Christi apostolos Petrum cruce, Paulum gladio occidit.

OROSIUS, *History*, VII, 7.

For he first punished the Christians at Rome with torture and death, and ordered that they should be harassed by a similar persecution throughout all the provinces. He even attempted to extirpate the very name, and put to death the most holy apostles of Christ, Peter by crucifixion, Paul by the sword.

The letters of Paul and Seneca are a forgery of the early fourth century, written probably either to recommend Christianity to students of Seneca or to recommend Seneca to Christian readers. Lightfoot says of the forger,¹ "Yet the writer is not an ignorant man. He has read part of Seneca and is aware of the philosopher's relations with Lucilius; . . . he is even aware of the Jewish sympathies of the Empress Poppaea and makes her regard St. Paul as a renegade; and lastly, he seems to have had before him some account of the Neronian fire and persecution which is no longer extant, for he speaks of 'Christians and Jews' being punished as the authors of the conflagration and mentions that 'a hundred and thirty-two houses and six² in-

¹ J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London, 1869), p. 328. *Vide* also pp. 268 *et seq.*; pp. 327 *et seq.*

² Halm gives quattor. Six must be a printer's error.

sulae were burnt in six days'. St. Jerome includes Seneca in his catalogue of Christian writers because of these letters,¹ apparently accepting them as genuine, but neither affirming nor denying their genuineness. Some modern critics even maintain that the letters which we have are not the same letters to which Jerome and Augustine refer,² but are a forgery of the ninth century. Fleury holds this opinion, at the same time questioning the genuineness of the original letters. Lightfoot rejects the theory.³

SENECA, *Epistles to Paul*,⁴ XII.

Greetings, my dearest Paul. Do you think that I am not exceedingly sad and sorrowful that punishment is repeatedly inflicted upon you all in spite of your innocence? and that the populace should regard you so criminal and so guilty, thinking that whatever misfortune befalls the city is brought about by you? . . . Why the city of Rome so often suffers from fire is quite evident. But if one in his humility could speak out, what the cause is, and if it was permitted to speak with impunity in these dark things, by this time everybody would understand all about it. The Christians and the Jews are wont to be punished and tortured as incendiaries.⁵ That idler, whoever he is, whose delight is an execution and whose veil is falsehood, will soon meet his appointed end. As that most holy one suffered for many, so also this one, an offering for all, will be consumed forever. In six days one hundred thirty-two houses and four tenements were burned; ⁶ the seventh day brought a respite.

¹ Hieronymus, *De Viris Illustribus*, 12.

² Fleury, *Saint Paul et Sénèque*, vol. ii, pp. 225 et seq.

³ J. B. Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, pp. 329 et seq.

⁴ *Senecae ad Paulum Epistolae* (ed. F. Haase, 1878, Teubner).

⁵ Christiani et Iudaei quasi machinatores incendii affecti supplicio uri solent.

⁶ Centum triginta duae domus, insulae quatuor [in] sex diebus arsere.

CHAPTER III

SOURCES FOR THE FLAVIAN PERIOD

IF the date assigned in the preceding chapter to Clement's epistle is correct, we have two references to the period of Domitian which are contemporary in the true sense of the word.

CLEMENT OF ROME, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, I, 1.

I. Because of the unexpected calamities and disasters which have befallen us one after another,¹ dear brethren, we realize that we have been somewhat slow in turning our attention to those matters concerning which you have consulted us; and especially, dearly beloved, to that abominable and unholy sedition so foreign and strange to the elect of God, which a few rash and headstrong persons have kindled to such a state of madness that your name, revered and illustrious and worthy of the love of all men, has been greatly blasphemed.

Chapter VII of the First Epistle. Quoted in Part II, Chapter II.

The *Apocalypse* presents almost as many difficulties as *First Peter*, though there is less disagreement as to its date and authenticity. The early Christian tradition² is almost unanimous in ascribing it to the end of the reign

¹ διὰ τὰς αἰφνιδίους καὶ ἐπαλλήλους γενομένας ἡμῖν συμφορὰς καὶ περιπτώσεις. (ed. J. B. Lightfoot, in *Apostolic Fathers*, London, 1890, pt. i, vol. ii, p. 7.)

² Vide Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, v, 30, 3, vide also H. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (London, 1907), p. xcix.

of Domitian, and most scholars to-day follow this tradition.¹ Ramsay is inclined to accept a date sometime after 90 and before 112 A. D.² As a matter of fact there are many reasons for holding that it could not have been written before about 90 A. D., but the chief reason for making 96 the *terminus ad quem* is to make it coincide with the persecution of Domitian. For my part I should be inclined to accept Ramsay's later date, for, even after we make every allowance for its exaggerated and ecstatic tone, it does not seem to be applicable to the conditions which are described in the other sources relating to this period. If it does refer to conditions in Asia Minor under Domitian it is the only source for such a persecution.

Revelation. (Revised Version.)

- 8 II And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write; . . . I
 9 know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and
 the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are
 10 not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Fear not the things which
 thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some
 of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have
 tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will
 give thee the crown of life.³
- 12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write; . . . I
 know where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's throne is: and
 thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even
 in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was
 killed among you, where Satan dwelleth.

¹ Zahn, *Intro. to the New Test.*, vol. iii, p. 420; Harnack, *Chron. der altchrist. Lit.*, vol. i, pp. 245 *et seq.*; H. Jordan, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1911), p. 176.

² Ramsay, *Ch. in the Rom. Emp.*, p. 302.

³ See also ii, 3 (Ephesus), and iii, 8-10 (Philadelphia).

9 VI And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the
10 altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of
11 God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried
with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and
true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that
dwell on the earth? And there was given them to each one a
white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest
yet for a little time, until their fellow servants also and their
brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be
fulfilled.

14 VII And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he
said to me, These are they which come out of the great tribula-
15 tion, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the
blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of
God; and they serve him day and night in his temple:¹ . . .

10 XII And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is
come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our
God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our
11 brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before our God
day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood
of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and
they loved not their life even unto death.

7 XIII And it was given unto him (the beast) to make war
with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to
him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and na-
8 tion. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, *every*
one whose name hath not been written in the book of life of
the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the
15 world. And it was given *unto him* to give breath to it, *even* to
the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both
speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image
of the beast should be killed.

9 XIV And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with
a great voice, If any man worshippeth the beast and his image,
10 and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he

¹ See also vii, 9.

also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

6 XVI For they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood hast thou given them to drink: they are worthy.

6 XVII And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

18 And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

24 XVIII And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

4 XX And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I *saw* the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Suetonius, writing some twenty-five years later, says nothing about a persecution of the Christians under Domitian. The first paragraph quoted here is given among a list of Domitian's early tyrannies. The second is mentioned in connection with the attempt to restore a depleted treasury. The last is included in a paragraph in which Suetonius tells how Domitian had become suspicious and was taking every possible precaution to safeguard his life.

C. Suetonii de Vita Caesarum, Domitianus, 10, 12, 15.

(ed. M. Ihm, 1908, Teubner.)

- 10 Complures senatores, in iis aliquot consulares, interemit; ex quibus Civicam Cerealem in ipso Asiae proconsulatu, Salvidienum Orfitum, Acilium Glabrimonem (in) exilio, quasi molitores rerum novarum.
- 12 Praeter ceteros Iudaicus fiscus acerbissime actus est; ad quem deferebantur, qui vel [ut] inprofessi Iudaicam viverent vitam vel dissimulata origine imposita genti tributa non pependissent. interfuisse me adolescentulum memini, cum a procuratore frequentissimoque consilio inspiceretur nonagenarius senex, an circumsectus esset.
- 15 Denique Flavium Clementem patruelem suum contemptissimae inertiae, cuius filios etiam tum parvulos successores palam destinaverat abolito[que] priore nomine alterum Vespasianum appellari, alterum Domitianum, repente ex tenuissima suspicione tantum non in ipso eius consulatu interemit.

SUETONIUS, *Domitian*, X, XII, XV.

- 10 He put to death many senators, among them several of consular rank, among whom were Civica Cerealis while he was still proconsul of Asia, Salvidienus Orfitus, Acilius Glabrio while in exile, on the ground that they were plotting a revolution.
- 12 Besides these other exactions the Jewish poll-tax was collected with very great severity, for which were reported those who either lived according to Jewish customs without openly professing to be Jews, or had concealed their origin and had not paid the tax levied upon that race. I remember being present as a youth, when an aged man of ninety was examined by a procurator and a numerous staff, to see whether or not he had been circumcised.

- 15 Finally upon a most trifling suspicion he suddenly slew his cousin Flavius Clemens almost before he was well out of his consulship, a man of most contemptible indolence, whose sons as mere children he had openly designated as his successors, having settled that, after dropping their own names, one was to be called Vespasian, the other Domitian.

MELITO, *Apology*, in EUSEBIUS, *Church History*, IV, 29, 9.
Quoted in Part II, Chapter II.

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, V.
Quoted in Part II, Chapters II and IV.

The *Roman History* of Cassius Dio was composed between 210 A. D. and 229 A. D. The books from which the following excerpts were made probably belong to about 220 A. D.; that is to say about one hundred and twenty-five years after the end of the reign of Domitian. The note on Domitian is found in one of those books of Dio which appear in the fairly reliable excerpt of Xiphilinus, an eleventh century monk. It will be noticed that Dio does not mention any persecution of the Christians.

CASSIUS DIO, *Roman History*, LXVI, 9, 1.

He (Vespasian) sent a despatch to Rome rescinding the disfranchisement of such persons as had been condemned for so-called acts of *maiestas*¹ by Nero and succeeding rulers. His action included living and dead alike, and he moreover stopped the indictments made upon such complaints.²

¹ ἀσέβεια, rather ungodliness or impiety, which, however, might be *maiestas*. (ed. Boissvain, Berlin, 1901.)

² Translation by H. B. Foster (Troy, 1906).

*Cassii Dionis Cocceiani Historiarum Romanarum, liber
LXVII, 14 (excerpt, per Xiphilinum).*

(ed. U. P. Boissevain, Berlin, 1901.)

Ἐν τούτῳ τῷ χρόνῳ ἡ ὁδὸς ἡ ἀπὸ Σινούεσσης εἰς Πουτεόλους ἀγούσα λίθοις ἐστο-
ρέσθη. κὰν τῷ αὐτῷ ἔτει ἄλλους τε πολλοὺς καὶ τὸν Φλάσιον [τὸν] Κλήμεντα
ὑπατεύοντα, καίπερ ἀνεψιὸν ὄντα καὶ γυναῖκα καὶ αὐτῇ συγγενῇ ἑαυτοῦ Φλαουίαν
Δομετίλλαν ἔχοντα, κατέσφαξεν ὁ Δομετιανός. ἐπηνέχθη δὲ ἀμφοῖν ἐγκλημα
ἀθεότητος, ὃς καὶ ἄλλοι εἰς τὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἡθῆ ἐξοκέλλοντες πολλοὶ κατεδι-
κάσθησαν, καὶ οἱ μὲν ἀπέθανον, οἱ δὲ τῶν γούν οὐσιῶν ἐστερήθησαν· ἡ δὲ Δομετίλλα
ὑπερωρίσθη μόνον εἰς Πανδατερίαν. τὸν δὲ δὴ Γλαβρίωνα τὸν μετὰ τοῦ Τραϊανοῦ
ἄρξαντα, κατηγορηθέντα τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ οἷα οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ ὅτι καὶ θηρίοις ἐμάχετο,
ἀπέκτεινεν. ἐφ' ᾧ πού καὶ τὰ μάλιστα ὀργὴν αὐτῷ ὑπὸ φθόνου ἔσχευ, ὅτι ὑπατεύοντα
αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ Ἀλβανὸν ἐπὶ τὰ Νεανισκείμενα ὠνομασμένα καλέσας λέοντα ἀποκτείνειν
μέγαν ἠνάγκασε, καὶ ὃς οὐ μόνον οὐδὲν ἐλυμάνθη ἀλλὰ καὶ εὐστοχάτα αὐτὸν
κατεργάσατο.

CASSIUS DIO, *Roman History*, LXVII, 14.

During this period the road leading from Sinuessa to Pu-
teoli was paved with stones. And the same year Domitian
slew among many others Flavius Clemens the consul, though
he was a cousin and had to wife Flavia Domitilla, who was
also a relative of the emperor.¹ The complaint brought against
them both was that of atheism, under which many others who
drifted into Jewish ways were condemned. Some of these were
killed and the remainder were at least deprived of their prop-
erty. Domitilla was merely banished to Pandateria;² but Gla-
brio, colleague of Trajan in the consulship, after being accused
on various stock charges, and also of fighting with wild beasts,
suffered death. This ability in the arena was the chief cause
of the emperor's anger against him,—an anger prompted by
jealousy. In the victim's consulship Domitian had summoned
him to Albanum to attend the so-called Juvenalia and had im-
posed on him the task of killing a large lion. Glabrio not only
escaped all injury but had despatched the creature with most
accurate aim.³

¹ His sister's daughter.

² Note the period here in the text.

³ Translation by H. B. Foster (Troy, 1906).

CASSIUS DIO, *Roman History*, LXVIII, 1.

Nerva also released such as were on trial for *maiestas*¹ and restored the exiles. . . . Others were not permitted to accuse anybody for *maiestas*¹ or for "Jewish living".²

As was indicated in Chapter II the *De mortibus persecutorum* was written about two hundred and twenty years after the end of the reign of Domitian. It is significant, not so much for the information it gives concerning the period of Domitian, as for the fact that it indicates a period of peace and prosperity extending from Domitian to Decius.

LACTANTIUS, *On the Manner in which the Persecutors Died*,³

III.

III. Some years after Nero there arose another ruler no less a tyrant (Domitian), who, although he administered a hateful despotism, for a long time oppressed his subjects and ruled in safety, until he stretched forth his impious hands against the Lord. But after he was instigated by evil spirits to persecute the righteous people,⁴ he was delivered into the hands of his enemies and suffered the penalties. . . . Accordingly after the commands of the tyrant had been rescinded the church not only was restored to its former condition but it shone forth much more brightly and with increased splendor. And in the succeeding years when many noble princes held the helm and the command of the Roman Empire, since the church suffered no attacks from its enemies it extended into the East

¹ ἀσέβεια again here as in lxvi, 9, 1.

² Ἰουδαϊκῶν βίον. Translation by H. B. Foster (Troy, 1906).

³ Ed. S. Brandt, Vienna, 1893, *Corp. Script. Eccl. Lat.*

⁴ Postquam vero ad persequendum iustum populum instinctu daemonum incitatus est.

and into the West, so that now there was no corner of the earth so remote that the religion of God had not penetrated it, indeed there was no nation of such barbarous customs that it did not upon its conversion to the worship of God become gentle and take up works of righteousness. But finally the long peace was broken (by Decius).

The following extracts from Eusebius, written in the first quarter of the fourth century, also refer to this period.

EUSEBIUS, *Chronicle*,¹ Olympiad, 218.

Next after Nero Domitian persecuted the Christians, and under him the apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos, where, as they say, he saw in a vision the Apocalypse, as Irenaeus explains. . . . Domitian ordered the descendants of David to be put to death that no one of Jewish royalty might be left. Bruttius writes that many Christians suffered martyrdom under Domitian. Also Flavia Domitilla, the daughter of the sister of the consul Flavius Clemens, escaped to the island of Pontia, since she had confessed that she was a Christian.

EUSEBIUS, *Church History*, III, 17, 18, 20.

Domitian, having shown great cruelty toward many, and having unjustly put to death no small number of well-born and notable men at Rome, and having without cause exiled and confiscated the property of a great many other illustrious men, finally became a successor of Nero in his hatred and enmity toward God. He was in fact the second that stirred up

¹ Translation from the Armenian version by J. Karst (in G. C. S., Leipzig, 1911), p. 218. Peterman in Schoene's edition gives another reading which might indicate that Flavia Domitilla and Flavius, a son of the consul Clemens, fled to Pontia. The first statement quoted and the second are separated, probably by two years.

a persecution against us, although his father Vespasian had undertaken nothing prejudicial to us.¹

18 It is said that in this persecution the apostle and evangelist John, who was still alive, was condemned to dwell on the island of Patmos in consequence of his testimony to the divine
2 word. Irenaeus, in the fifth book of his work against Heresies, where he discusses the number of the name of Anti-Christ which is given in the so-called Apocalypse of John,
3 speaks as follows concerning him: . . . "For it was seen not long ago, but almost in our own generation, at the end of the reign of Domitian."

4 To such a degree, indeed, did the teachings of our faith flourish at that time that even those writers who were far from our religion did not hesitate to mention in their histories the persecution and the martyrdoms which took place during
5 it. And they, indeed, accurately indicated the time. For they recorded that in the fifteenth year of Domitian, Flavia Domitilla, daughter of a sister of Flavius Clemens, who at that time was one of the consuls of Rome, was exiled with many others to the island of Pontia in consequence of testimony borne to Christ.²

20 Then they (the grandchildren of Jude who were accused of belonging to the race of David) showed their hands, exhibiting the hardness of their bodies and the callousness produced upon their hands by continuous toil as evidence of their own
7 labor. . . . Upon hearing this, Domitian did not pass judgment against them, but, despising them as of no account, he let them go, and by a decree put a stop to the persecution of the

¹ δεύτερος δὴτα τὸν καθ' ἡμῶν ἀνεκίειν διωγμὸν, καίπερ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῷ Οὐεσπασιανοῦ μηδὲν καθ' ἡμῶν ἀτοπον ἐπινοήσαντος. (ed. E. Schwartz, 1903. G. C. S.)

² εἰς τοσοῦτον δὲ ἄρα κατὰ τοὺς δηλουμένους ἢ τῆς ἡμετέρας πίστεως διέλαμπεν διδασκαλία, ὥς καὶ τοὺς ἀποθεν τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς λόγον συγγραφεῖς μὴ ἀποκνῆσαι ταῖς αὐτῶν ἱστορίαις τὸν τε διωγμὸν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ μαρτύρια παραδοῦναι, οἱ γε καὶ τὸν καιρὸν ἐπ' ἀκριβὲς ἐπεσημήναντο, ἐν ἔτει πεντεκαιδεκάτῳ Δομετιανοῦ μετὰ πλείστων ἐτέρων καὶ Φλαυίαν Δομέτιλλαν ἱστορήσαντες, ἐξ ἀδελφῆς γεγοννίαν Φλαυίου Κλήμεντος, ἐνδὸς τῶν τηνικάδε ἐπὶ Ῥώμης ὑπάτων, τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν μαρτυρίας ἔνεκεν εἰς νῆσον Ποντίαν κατὰ τιμωρίαν δεδῶσθαι.

- 8 Church.¹ But when they were released they ruled the churches, because they were witnesses and were also relatives of the Lord. And peace being established, they lived until the time of Trajan. These things are related by Hegesippus.
- 10 But after Domitian had reigned fifteen years, and Nerva had succeeded to the empire, the Roman Senate, according to the writers that record the history of those days, voted that Domitian's honors should be cancelled, and that those who had been unjustly banished should return to their homes and
- 11 have their property restored to them.² It was at this time that the apostle John returned from his banishment in the island and took up his abode at Ephesus, according to an ancient Christian tradition.³

The *Contra Arianos* of Hilary belongs to about 365 A. D. He mentions Vespasian as a persecutor, though he must have had in mind his son Domitian whom he omits,⁴ unlike the other Christian writers.

Hilarii Pictaviensis Contra Arianos, 3.

(ed. Migne, 1845. *Patrologiae Latinae*, vol. 10).

Nerone se, credo, aut Vespasiano, aut Decio patrocinantibus tuebatur? quorum in nos odiis confessio divinae praedicationis effloruit.

HILARY OF POITIERS, *Against the Arians, 3.*

Did it (the church) look out for itself, indeed, when a Nero or a Vespasian or a Decius was its protector, because of whose hatred against us the confession of the divine faith flourished?

¹ ἐφ' οἷς μηδὲν αὐτῶν κατεγνωκότα τὸν Δομετιανόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς εὐτελῶν καταφρονήσαντα, ἐλευθέρους μὲν αὐτοὺς ἀνεῖναι, καταπαῦσαι δὲ προστάγματος τὸν κατὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας διωγμόν.

² ἐπανελθεῖν δ' ἐπὶ τὰ οἰκεῖα μετὰ τοῦ καὶ τὰς υἱσίας ἀπολαβεῖν τοὺς ἀδίκως ἐξεληλαμένους ἢ Ῥωμαίων σύγκλητος βουλῇ ψηφίζεται.

³ Translation by A. C. McGiffert, in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, vol. i.

⁴ See Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 89. But see Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. i, pp. 15 *et seq.*

Sulpicius, at the beginning of the fifth century, adds no new details concerning Domitian, but simply states that he persecuted the Christians, and then repeats the story of John. His chapter on Titus is the only statement concerning that emperor's policy.

SULPICIUS SEVERUS, *Sacred History*,¹ II, 30, 6, 7, 8.

- 6 Titus is said to have first called a council and deliberated whether a temple of such wonderful workmanship should be destroyed. For it seemed to some that a sacred edifice renowned beyond all things of human construction ought not to be destroyed, since preserved it would furnish an evidence of Roman moderation, but if destroyed it would furnish an ever-
- 7 lasting proof of cruelty. But, on the other side, many and even Titus himself, thought the temple ought especially to be destroyed, in order that the religion of the Jews and of the Christians might be more thoroughly uprooted, since these religions, though opposed to one another, still proceeded from the same authors; the Christians had come from the Jews: if the root was destroyed the offshoot would quickly perish.
- 8 Thus, by the will of God, the minds of all were inflamed, and the temple was destroyed, three hundred and thirty-one years ago.

SULPICIUS SEVERUS, *Sacred History*, II, 31, 1.

Then after an interval Domitian, the son of Vespasian, persecuted the Christians. At this time he banished John the apostle and evangelist to the island of Patmos.

The following extract from Jerome's epistles is taken from the account of the travels of Paula, 385 A. D. The letter itself was written in 404 A. D. It simply shows the tradition at the beginning of the fifth century. Note that he refers to the long martyrdom of Domitilla at Pontia.

¹ *Sulpicii Severi Chronicorum liber ii* (ed. C. Halm, 1866, C. S. E. L.).

Hieronymi Epistola, CVIII, 7.(ed. Vallarsi in Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, 22, 1857.)

Delata ad insulam Pontiam, quam clarissimae quondam feminarum sub Domitiano Principe pro confessione nominis Christiani, Flaviae Domitillae nobilitavit exilium, vidensque cellulas in quibus illa longum martyrium duxerat sumptis fidei alis, Ierosolymam et sancta Loca videre cupiebat.

JEROME, Epistles, CVIII, 7.

She (Paula) was borne to the island of Pontia which has long since been ennobled by the exile of the most illustrious of women Flavia Domitilla, banished in the reign of Domitian for confessing the name of Christ; and seeing the cells in which she spent her long martyrdom, assuming the wings of faith, she was anxious to see Jerusalem and the holy places.

Orosius, also writing in the early fifth century, gives a detailed account of a persecution under Domitian, but unfortunately he is entirely unreliable. He indicates that the persecution was general, and that it was due to the refusal of the Christians to worship Domitian as a god.

Pauli Orosii Historiarum adversum paganos, VII, 10, 1, 5.

(ed. C. Zangemeister, 1889, *Teubner*).

- I Anno ab urbe condita DCCCXXX Domitianus Titi frater, ab Augusto nonus, fratri successit in regnum. qui per annos XV ad hoc paulatim per omnes scelerum gradus crevit, ut confirmatissimam toto orbe Christi Ecclesiam datis ubique crudelissimae persecutionis edictis convellere auderet. . . . idemque efferatus superbia, qua se deum coli vellet, persecutionem in Christianos agi secundus a Nerone imperavit. quo tempore etiam beatissimus Iohannes apostolus in Patmum insulam relegatus fuit.
- 5

OROSIUS, *History*, VII, 10, 1, 5.

- 1 In the year 830 A. U. C., Domitian, the brother of Titus and the ninth after Augustus, succeeded his brother. And he for fifteen years rose little by little through all grades of wickedness to the point where he dared to overthrow the church of Christ, well established throughout the earth; and every-
5 where he issued edicts for a most severe persecution . . . Exasperated by his own arrogance, since he wished himself to be revered as a god, following Nero's footsteps, he ordered a persecution to be directed against the Christians. At this time also the most holy apostle John was relegated to the island of Patmos.

That Domitilla was a Christian seems to be fairly well substantiated by a number of inscriptions discovered by De Rossi in a catacomb which he identifies with the *Coemeterium Domitillae*. Lightfoot¹ concludes that the connection of this cemetery with the wife of Flavius Clemens is established beyond any reasonable doubt. He holds that it was land granted by her to her dependants and co-religionists for a cemetery.²

Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, VI, 8942 (p. 1187).

TATIA.BAVCYL
TRIX.SEPTEM.LIB
DIVI.VESPASIAN
FLAVIAE.DOMITIL
VESPASIANI.NEPTIS.A
IVS.BENEFICIO.HOC.SEPVLCRV m feci sic
MEIS.LIBERTIS.LIBERTABVS.PO sterisq. eor

¹ Lightfoot, *St. Clement*, vol. i, p. 36.

² *Ibid.*, p. 39. See also De Rossi, *Roma Sotterranea*, vol. i, pp. 266 *et seq.* In the English edition of Northcote and Brownlow, vol. i, p. 69.

Mommsen¹ has restored the inscription as follows: TATIA BAVCYL . . . [NV]TRIX SEPTem LIB[ERORVM PRONEPOTVM] DIVI VESPASIAN[I, FILIORVM FL. CLEMENTIS ET] FLAVIAE DOMITIL(L)[AE VXORIS EIVS, DIVI] VESPASIANI NEPTIS A[CCEPTO LOCO E]IVS BENEFICIO HOC SEPVLCRV[M] cet. Lightfoot² objects to the length of the restoration and to the awkwardness of the expression 'liberorum nepotum.' He suggests [NV]TRIX . SEPTem . LIB[ERORVM] . DIVI . VESPASIAN[I . ATAVE] FLAVIAE . DOMITIL[LAE etc.

I, Tatia Baucylla, nurse of the seven grandchildren of the deified Vespasian, the children of Flavius Clemens and of Flavia Domitilla his wife, the granddaughter of the deified Vespasian, having received this plot of ground through her kindness, have built this sepulchre for my freedmen and my freedwomen and for their descendants.

Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, VI, 16246 (p. 1836).

SER. CORNELIO
IVLIANO. FRAT
PIISSIMO. ET
urceus CALVISIAE. EIVS *patera*
P. CALVISIVS
PHILOTAS. ET. SIBI
EX. INDVLGENTIA
FLAVIAE. DOMITILL
IN FR. P. XXXV
IN AGR. P. XXXX

P. Calvisius Philotas (has built this sepulchre) for Sergius Cornelius Julianus, his brother of most sacred memory, and for his (wife) Calvisia, and for himself, by the favor of Flavia Domitilla.

Frontage,—35 feet.

Depth,—40 feet.

¹ *C. I. L.*, loc. cit.

² Lightfoot, *St. Clement of Rome*, vol. i, pp. 114 et seq.; for still another reading see G. Henzen, *Volumen Tertium Collectionis Orellianae supplementa emendationesque exhibens* (Zurich, 1856), p. 72.

CHAPTER IV

SOURCES FOR THE PERIOD OF TRAJAN

THE letter of Pliny to Trajan concerning the Christians and the rescript of Trajan together constitute one of the most important documents in the whole history of early Christianity. These letters were written in the year 112 A. D. or possibly the year following. They not only clear up many points concerning the relation between the Roman State and Christianity, but they are invaluable also for their information about the Christian religion itself. It is their bearing upon the attitude of the Roman Emperor toward the Christians, however, which particularly interests us here.

The correspondence between Pliny and Trajan was first published in 1502 from a copy of a manuscript then recently discovered and soon afterwards lost. Before this time this correspondence was altogether unknown in spite of the references of Tertullian, Eusebius, and others. No less than five editions of Pliny's letters had been published, but the correspondence with the emperor was in none of them. It was in May, 1502, that Hieronymus Avantius of Verona published the letters under the following title: *C. Plinii Iunioris ad Traianum Epistolae 46, nuper reperte cum eiusdem responsis*. This mutilated and corrupt text, which left out entirely the first twenty-six letters, had been brought from France by one Peter Leander. The edition was full of errors and misspellings.

Eight months later the same forty-six letters were edited by Beroaldus at Bologna. Many editorial corrections were made in this edition, but there is no indication that the editor consulted an original manuscript. In 1506 the letters were published by Catanaeus of Milan, but if he used any manuscript it was the same copy that was used by Avantius. Two years later the first Aldine edition was published, the first edition to contain the whole of the Pliny-Trajan correspondence, including the twenty-six letters heretofore omitted. According to Hardy,¹ Aldus based his edition either on the original codex itself or else on a copy of that codex made by one Joannes Jucundus. The codex was probably taken to Italy sometime before 1508, and since that date has been completely lost.²

Keil in his edition follows Avantius for the letters which he published, namely, 41-121, and the first Aldine for the rest. Hardy,³ however, has since discovered in the Bodleian library what he believes to be the oldest extant authority for the letters. He believes that it was made from Jucundus' copy of the Parisian codex, and was in fact the copy from which the first proof of Aldus was made. He, therefore, takes this Bodleian copy as his principal authority for the text of all the letters, adopting in some cases the reading of the first Aldine edition.

The genuineness of the two letters quoted herein has been questioned by a number of scholars. In the eighteenth century Semler held that the letter of Pliny

¹ E. G. Hardy, *Pliny's Correspondence with Trajan* (London, 1889), p. 67.

² For the history of the text see Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 65 *et seq.*; Schanz, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* (München, 1901), vol. ii, pt. ii, p. 273.

³ Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

was apocryphal, and suggested that Tertullian was the forger.¹ More recently the doubts as to their authenticity have been expressed by Aube,² Dupuy,³ Guignebert,⁴ and others.⁵

One of the arguments against the genuineness of the letters is based upon the suspicious nature of the history of the manuscript itself.⁶ But since the discovery of the Bodleian manuscript by Hardy it is pretty certain that a manuscript did exist and that the correspondence was not a fabrication of the humanists.

The following are some of the doubts that have been raised by those who attack the genuineness of the letters. In general, the incoherence of the development and the presence of propositions apparently strange to the rest indicate alterations or interpolations.⁷ It is strange indeed that Pliny, who had held the office of praetor and consul, and who had not quitted the bar for more than twenty years did not know under what law the Christians were punished, or in fact anything about them.⁸ But in spite of his professed ignorance he pronounces without

¹ Semler, *Novae Observationes hist. et relig. christ.* (Halle, 1784), p. 37, as cited in Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 124, note 1; *Vide* Guignebert, *Tertullien* (Paris, 1901), p. 92, note 1.

² Aubé, *Hist. des pers.* (Paris, 1875), p. 211 *et seq.* Aubé, however, (p. 218) after giving all his objections to the letters, recognizes the difficulties in the way of rejecting them and leaves the question open.

³ Dupuy, "Étude sur les lettres de Pline et de Trajan," in *Annals de la faculté des lettres de Bordeaux*, vol. ii, 1880, p. 182 *et seq.*

⁴ Guignebert, *Tertullien*, pp. 75-94; also *La Primauté de Pierre et la venue de Pierre à Rome* (Paris, 1909), p. 188, note 4.

⁵ Conrat, *Die Christenverfolgungen im römischen Reiche* (Leipzig, 1897), p. 50, note 77; Havet, *le Christianisme* (Paris, 1884), vol. iv, pp. 425-431.

⁶ Guignebert, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁷ Guignebert, *Tertullien*, p. 77.

⁸ Guignebert, *loc. cit.*; Aube, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

hesitation the sentence of death,¹ and that too simply for their obstinacy.² Guignebert believes that what Pliny is supposed to have said of the Christians has "a very characteristic Christian aroma."³ It is not at all likely for example that Pliny would have said that none who were really Christians could be compelled to sacrifice or to curse Christ.⁴ Furthermore the declarations of the apostates seem improbable. Men who had professed a religion perfectly moral and innocent had abandoned it. They contented themselves with a beautiful eulogy which their judge benevolently repeats without comment, at the risk of passing for a persecutor of virtue.⁵ Still another argument is that in no other place in his whole writings does Pliny make any mention of the Christians in spite of their alleged importance;⁶ nor are the letters known to any of the contemporary writers.⁷ The gravest doubts, however, are due to the statements concerning the ravages of Christianity in the towns, villages, and country districts of Bithynia and Pontus.⁸

Dupuy concludes from his study that the letter is not absolutely contrary to the facts, but that it is not Pliny's. It betrays the hand of a forger preoccupied with the establishment of evidence favorable to the Christians and

¹ Dupuy, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

² Guignebert, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81; Aube, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

⁷ Guignebert, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁸ Aubé, *op. cit.*, p. 214, who cites Origen, *Contra Celsum*, viii; Dupuy, *op. cit.*, p. 192; Guignebert, *op. cit.*, p. 86. For a refutation of these arguments one after another see Th. Babut, "Remarques sur les deux lettres de Pline et de Trajan," in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1910, p. 298 et seq.

with exaggerating the rigor of the persecutors. The rescript of Trajan is authentic, except the phrase *neque enim universum*. There was a genuine letter of Pliny but it has been falsified and suppressed by a Christian anterior to Tertullian.¹ Guignebert, who substantially agrees with Dupuy, admits that it is impossible to give a decisive argument against the authenticity of the two letters, but he maintains that it is just as impossible to establish their genuineness.²

It is unnecessary either to answer all of these objections or to enter in detail into all the arguments in favor of the genuineness of the letters. Perhaps it is sufficient to say that to-day the weight of scholarship is decidedly in favor of accepting the letters as authentic.³ The style, the content, and the purport of the letters place their genuineness beyond a doubt. The more one studies these letters the more significant they become. The more one studies a forgery the more discrepancies he is likely to discover. That a Christian forger could have produced this document seems out of the question. As Lightfoot says,⁴ "What Christian writer,⁵ if bent on a forgery, and therefore unfettered by any scruples of veracity, would have confessed that crowds of his fellow-believers had denied their faith, that all alike had abandoned their agape at the bidding of a heathen magistrate,

¹ Dupuy, *op. cit.*, p. 182. *Vide* Guignebert, *op. cit.*, p. 92 note.

² Guignebert, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

³ Renan, *Les Evangiles*, p. 476; Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. i, p. 55; Hardy, *Correspondence of Pliny and Trajan*, p. 64; Arnold, *Zur Gesch. der Plin. Christenverfolgung*, Mommsen, "Zur Lebensgeschichte des jüngeren Plinius," in *Hermes Zeitschrift für classische Philologie* (Berlin, 1869), vol. iii, p. 53 *et seq.*

⁴ Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. i, p. 55.

⁵ Babut, *loc. cit.*, p. 301, says that if the letter is a forgery it is the work of an apostate and not that of a Christian.

that the persecution was already refilling the heathen temples which before were empty, and that there was good hope, if the same policy was pursued, of a general apostasy ensuing?" As for the statements of Pliny concerning the number of the Christians, the situation probably had been much exaggerated by those who had informed against the Christians, namely, the priests and butchers and in general by those interested in the temple worship. It best served Pliny's purpose to accept their statements and even to add his own coloring in order to gain from Trajan, by showing the great number involved, as clement an answer as possible.¹ But even if the temples were deserted, the Christians were not necessarily entirely to blame. The Jews as well as the Christians held themselves aloof from participation in the temple service.²

C. Plini Caecili Secundi Epistularum ad Traianum Imperatorem cum eiusdem responsis liber, XCVI [XCVII].

(ed. R. C. Kukula, 1912, Teubner).

- 1 Sollemne est mihi, domine, omnia, de quibus dubito, ad te referre. Quis enim potest melius vel cunctationem meam regere vel ignorantiam instruere? Cognitionibus de Christianis interfui numquam: ideo nescio, quid et quatenus aut puniri
- 2 soleat aut quaeri. Nec mediocriter haesitavi, sitne aliquod delictum aetatum, an quamlibet teneri nihil a robustioribus differant, detur paenitentiae venia, an ei, qui omnino Christianus fuit, desisse non prosit, nomen ipsum, si flagitiis careat, an flagitia cohaerentia nomini puniantur. Interim in iis, qui ad me tamquam Christiani deferebantur, hunc sum secutus modum.
- 3 Interrogavi ipsos, an essent Christiani. Confitentes iterum ac

¹ Babut, in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1910, *loc. cit.*, p. 300.

² Hardy, *Pliny's Correspondence*, p. 64. Allard (*Hist. des pers.*, p. 154) interprets Pliny's statements literally and says that Pliny to his great surprise had arrived in a Christian state.

- tertio interrogavi supplicium minatus: perseverantes duci iussi. Neque enim dubitabam, quaecumque esset, quod faterentur, pertinaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri.
- 4 Fuerunt alii similis amentiae, quos, quia cives Romani erant, adnotavi in urbem remittendos. Mox ipso tractatu, ut fieri
- 5 solet, diffundente se crimine plures species inciderunt. Propositus est libellus sine auctore multorum nomina continens. Qui negabant esse se Christianos aut fuisse, cum prae-eunte me deos adpellarent et imagini tuae, quam propter hoc iusseram cum simulacris numinum adferri, ture ac vino supplicarent, praeterea male dicerent Christo, quorum nihil posse cogi dicuntur, qui sunt re vera Christiani, dimittendos esse putavi.
- 6 Alii ab indice nominati esse se Christianos dixerunt et mox negaverunt; fuisse quidem, sed desisse, quidam ante triennium, quidam ante plures annos, non nemo etiam ante viginti.¹ Hi quoque omnes et imaginem tuam deorumque simulacra venerati sunt et Christo male dixerunt. Adfirmabant autem hanc
- 7 fuisse summam vel culpae suae vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum invicem seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum adpellati abnegarent. Quibus peractis morem sibi discedendi fuisse rursusque coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen et innoxium; quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum, quo secundum
- 8 mandata tua hetaerias esse vetueram. Quo magis necessarium credidi ex duabus ancillis, quae ministrae dicebantur, quid esset veri, et per tormenta quaerere. Nihil aliud inveni quam superstitionem pravam, immodicam. Ideo dilata cognitione ad
- 9 consulendum te decucurri. Visa est enim mihi res digna consultatione, maxime propter periclitantium numerum. Multi enim omnis aetatis, omnis ordinis, utriusque sexus etiam vocantur in periculum et vocabuntur. Neque civitates tantum, sed vicos etiam atque agros superstitionis istius contagio per-
- 10 vagata est; quae videtur sisti et corrigi posse. Certe satis con-

¹ Hardy (1889) here follows Ritterhusius and adds quinque.

stat prope iam desolata templa coepisse celebrari, et sacra sollemnia diu intermissa repeti pastumque venire victimarum, citius adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur. Ex quo facile est opinari, quae turba hominum emendari possit, si sit paenitentiae locus.

xcvii [xcviii].

TRAIANUS PLINIO.

1 Actum, quem debuisti, mi Secunde, in excutiendis causis
eorum, qui Christiani ad te delati fuerant, secutus es. Neque
enim in universum aliquid, quod quasi certam formam habeat,
2 constitui potest. Conquirendi non sunt; si defferantur et argu-
antur, puniendi sunt, ita tamen, ut, qui negaverit se Christi-
anum esse idque re ipsa manifestum fecerit, id est suppli-
cando dis nostris, quamvis suspectus in praeteritum, veniam
ex paenitentia impetret. Sine auctore vero propositi libelli in
nullo crimine locum habere debent. Nam et pessimi exempli
nec nostri saeculi est.

Letters of Pliny the Younger and Trajan, XCVI [XCVII].

Pliny to the Emperor Trajan.

1 It is my custom, my lord, to refer to you all things concern-
ing which I am in doubt. For who is better able to guide my
indecision or enlighten my ignorance? I have never taken
part in the trials of Christians, hence I do not know for what
crime or to what extent it is customary to punish or investi-
2 gate. I have been in no little doubt as to whether any dis-
crimination is made for age, or whether the treatment of the
young does not differ from that of the more mature; whether
pardon is granted in case of repentance, or whether he who
has ever been a Christian gains nothing by having ceased to
be one; whether the name itself, without regard to crimes, or
the crimes attributed to the name are punished. In the mean-
time I have followed this procedure in the case of those who
3 have been brought before me as Christians. I asked them
whether they were Christians. If they confessed I repeated

the question a second and a third time with threats of punishment; those who were obstinate I ordered to be executed. For I did not doubt that, whatever it was that they confessed, their stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy ought certainly to be punished. There were others of similar madness, who, because they were Roman citizens, I have noted for sending to the city. Soon, the crime spreading, as is usual, because of this very treatment, more cases arose. An anonymous accusation containing many names was presented. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians ought, I thought, to be dismissed, since they repeated after me an invocation to the gods and made supplication with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for the purpose together with the statues of the gods, and since besides they reviled Christ, not one of which things, they say, those who are really Christians can be compelled to do. Others accused by the informer said that they were Christians and then denied it; in fact they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, some many years before, several even twenty. All of these both worshiped your image and the statues of the gods and reviled Christ. They continued to maintain that this was the amount of their fault or error, that on a fixed day they were accustomed to come together before daylight and to sing by turns a hymn to Christ as a god, and that they bound themselves by oath, not for some crime, but that they would not commit theft, robbery, or adultery, that they would not betray a trust, nor deny a deposit when called upon. After this it was their custom to disperse and to come together again to partake of food, of an ordinary and harmless variety, however. Even this they ceased to do after the publication of my edict in which, according to your command, I had forbidden associations. Hence I believed it the more necessary even to put to torture two female slaves, who were called deaconesses, in order to find out what was true. I found nothing but a vicious, extravagant superstition. Consequently I postponed the examination and made haste to consult you. For it seemed to me a subject worthy of consul-

tation, especially on account of the number of those in peril. For many of all ages, of every rank, and even of both sexes are and will be called into danger. The infection of this superstition has spread not alone to the cities, but even to the villages and country districts. It seems possible to check it and bring about a reform. It is certainly evident that the temples, recently deserted, have begun to be frequented, that the sacred rites, long neglected, have begun to be restored, and that fodder for victims, for which until now there was scarcely a purchaser, is sold. From which one may readily judge how great a number of men can be reclaimed if repentance is permitted.

XCVII [XCVIII], Trajan to Pliny.

- 1 You have followed the correct procedure, my Secundus, in conducting the cases of those who were accused before you as Christians. For no general rule can be laid down as a
- 2 set form. They ought not to be sought out; if they are brought before you and the case is proven, they should be punished; provided that he who denies that he is a Christian, and proves this by making supplication to our gods, however much he may have been suspected in the past, shall secure pardon on repentance. Anonymous accusations, however, are inadmissible for any crime, for they afford a very bad precedent and are not worthy of our age.

The epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians is probably a genuine letter of Polycarp¹ written about the summer of 110 A. D.² If so we have here a contemporary authority for a number of martyrdoms both in Antioch and Philippi, which are almost contemporaneous with the legation of Pliny in Bithynia.

¹ Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. i, pp. 578-603.

² *Ibid.*, p. 444.

Epistle of Polycarp to the Phillipians, 9.

I exhort you all therefore to be obedient unto the word of righteousness and to practise all endurance, which also ye saw with your own eyes in the blessed Ignatius and Zosimus and Rufus, yea and in others also who came from among yourselves, as well as in Paul himself and the rest of the Apostles.¹

The *Apology* of Tertullian bears directly upon the question of the genuineness of Pliny's letter and the emperor's rescript. Tertullian, who wrote in the same century, follows the letter so closely that he must have had it before him. The second quotation bears upon the question of the existence of laws specifically forbidding Christianity. This passage is the mainstay in the defense of Callewaert, Allard, and in general, of those who argue that such laws existed.²

Tertulliani Apologeticum, II.

(ed. G. Rauschen, Bonn, 1906.)

- 6 Atquin invenimus inquisitionem quoque in nos prohibitam. Plinius enim Secundus, cum provinciam regeret, damnatis quibusdam christianis, quibusdam de gradu pulsus, ipsa tamen multitudine perturbatus, quid de cetero ageret, consuluit tunc Traianum imperatorem, adlegans, praeter obstinationem non sacrificandi nihil aliud se de sacramentis eorum comperisse, quam coetus antelucanos ad canendum Christo ut deo et ad confoederandam disciplinam homicidium adulterium fraudem
- 7 perfidiam et cetera scelera prohibentem. Tunc Traianus rescripsit, hoc genus inquirendos quidem non esse, oblatos vero puniri oportere.

¹ Translation and edition by J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers, S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. iii, p. 474.

² Vide ch. i in pt. i and pt. ii.

- 8 O sententiam necessitate confusam! Negat inquirendos ut innocentes et mandat puniendos ut nocentes. Parcit et saevit, dissimulat et animadvertit. Quid temetipsam censura circumvenis? Si damnas, cur non et inquiris? si non inquiris, cur non et absolvis?

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, II.

- 6 But on the contrary we find that even an investigation into our case is forbidden. For Pliny the Younger, when he was governor of a province, having condemned some Christians and driven some from their steadfastness, being nevertheless disturbed by their very number, accordingly asked the advice of the Emperor Trajan as to what he should do in the future. He related that except for an obstinacy in refusing to sacrifice he had discovered nothing concerning their religious mysteries save meetings before daybreak for singing to Christ as a god and for combining in a creed which forbade homicide, adultery, cheating, dishonesty and other crimes. Thereupon
- 7 Trajan sent a rescript that the Christians were not indeed to be sought out, but that if they were brought before him, they should be punished.
- 8 O judgment necessarily inconsistent! It forbids them to be sought out as if they were innocent, and commands them to be punished as if they were guilty. It spares and rages furiously, it dissembles and punishes. O severity, why do you so afflict yourself? If you condemn, why do you not also inquire? if you do not inquire, why do you not also acquit?

Tertulliani Apologeticum, V.

- 7 Quales ergo leges istae, quas adversus nos soli execuntur inpii iniusti turpes truces vani dementes, quas Traianus ex parte frustratus est vetando inquiri christianos, quas nullus Vespasianus, quamquam Iudaeorum debellator, nullus Hadrianus, quamquam omnium curiositatum explorator, nullus Pius, nullus Verus inpressit?

TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, V.

- 7 Of what sort then are these laws, which only the impious the unjust the infamous the ferocious the senseless and the insane enforce against us, which Trajan to an extent made of no effect by forbidding the Christians to be sought out, which neither Vespasian though the conqueror of the Jews, nor Hadrian though an investigator of all things antiquated, nor Pius, nor Verus enforced?

Practically all of the information concerning the period of Trajan which is not found in the letter of Pliny is given in these extracts from Eusebius. The latter apparently knew of the correspondence of Pliny and Trajan only through the *Apology* of Tertullian. He also quotes Hegesippus, who wrote about 180 A. D., and whose works are now lost. Eusebius seems to be responsible for the tradition of a third great persecution of the Christians under Trajan. Jerome, in his translation of the *Chronicle* speaks definitely of the *Third Persecution*. Jerome, in fact, gives a very free interpretation of this passage.

EUSEBIUS, *Church History*,¹ III, 32, 33.

- 1 It is reported that after the age of Nero and Domitian, under the emperor whose times we are now recording, a persecution was stirred up against us in certain cities in consequence of a popular uprising.² In this persecution we have understood that Symeon, the son of Clopas, who, as we have shown, was the second bishop of the church of Jerusalem, suffered martyrdom. Hegesippus, whose words we have already quoted in various places, is a witness to this fact also. Speak-

¹ Translation by A. C. McGiffert in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, vol. i.

² μερικῶς καὶ κατὰ πόλεις ἐξ ἐπαναστάσεως δῆμων τὸν καθ' ἡμῶν κατέχει λόγος ἀνακινηθῆναι διωγμὸν.

ing of certain heretics he adds that Symeon was accused by them at this time; and since it was clear that he was a Christian,¹ he was tortured in various ways for many days, and astonished even the judge himself and his attendants in the highest degree, and finally he suffered a death similar to that of our Lord. But there is nothing like hearing the historian himself, who writes as follows: "Certain of these heretics brought accusation against Symeon, the son of Clopas, on the ground that he was a descendant of David and a Christian; and thus he suffered martyrdom, at the age of one hundred and twenty years, while Trajan was emperor and Atticus governor. . . ." "And after being tortured for many days he suffered martyrdom, and all, including even the proconsul, marvelled that, at the age of one hundred and twenty years, he could endure so much. And orders were given that he should be crucified."

So great a persecution was at this time opened against us in many places that Plinius Secundus, one of the most noted of governors, being disturbed by the great number of martyrs,² communicated with the emperor concerning the multitude of those that were put to death for their faith. At the same time, he informed him in his communication that he had not heard of their doing any thing profane or contrary to the laws,—except that they arose at dawn and sang hymns to Christ as a God; but that they renounced adultery and murder and like criminal offenses, and did all things in accordance with the laws. In reply to this Trajan made the following decree: that the race of Christians should not be sought after, but when found should be punished. On account of this the persecution which had threatened to be a most terrible one was to a certain degree checked, but there were still left plenty of pretexts for those who wished to do us harm. Sometimes the people, sometimes the rulers in various places, would lay plots

¹ ὁ δηλούμενος ὡς ἄν Χριστιανός.

² Τοσούτος γε μὴν ἐν πλείοσι τόποις ὁ καθ' ἡμῶν ἐπιτάβη τότε διωγμός, ὡς Πλίνιον Σεκοῦνδον, ἐπιστημότατον ἡγεμόνων, ἐπὶ τῷ πλήθει τῶν μαρτύρων κενηθέντα.

against us, so that, although no great persecution took place, local persecutions were nevertheless going on in particular provinces, and many of the faithful endured martyrdom in various forms.¹ We have taken our account from the Latin
3 Apology of Tertullian which we mentioned above.

EUSEBIUS, *Chronicle*,² Olympiad, 221.

After Trajan had instigated a persecution against the Christians, Simon, the son of Clopas and the bishop of Jerusalem, suffered martyrdom.³ He in turn was succeeded by Justus. Ignatius also, the bishop of Antioch, suffered martyrdom,⁴ after whom Heron was appointed as the third bishop.

Pliny the Younger, governor of a certain province, condemned many of the Christians to death and led them to a fate corresponding to their reward.⁵ Distressed at the multitude of them, he knew not what to do. Reporting to Trajan the emperor, he declared that except for a refusal to worship the idols he had found nothing illegal⁶ about them. He also informed him that the Christians arose before daybreak and glorified Christ as God, and that they restrained themselves from adultery, murder, and similar crimes. And to this Trajan sent back a rescript that the Christians should not indeed be sought out. These things are reported by Tertullian.

¹ δι' οὐ ποσῶς μὲν τοῦ διωγμοῦ σβεσθῆναι τὴν ἀπειλὴν σφοδρότατα ἐγκειμένην, οὐ χεῖρόν γε μὴν τοῖς κακουργεῖν περὶ ἡμᾶς ἐθέλουσιν λείπεσθαι προφάσεις, ἐστ' ὅπη μὲν τῶν δῆμων, ἐστ' ὅπη δὲ καὶ τῶν κατὰ χώρας ἀρχόντων τὰς καθ' ἡμῶν συσκευαζομένων ἐπιβουλὰς, ὥς καὶ ἀνευ προφανῶν διωγμῶν μερικοὺς κατ' ἐπαρχίαν ἐξάπτεσθαι πλείους τε τῶν πιστῶν διαφόροις ἐναγωνίζεσθαι μαρτυρίοις.

² Translation from the Armenian by J. Karst, *Eusebius Werke, Die Chronik*, p. 218.

³ Jerome (in Schoene, *Eusebi Chroniconum Canonum*, p. 163) gives *crucifigitur*.

⁴ Jerome (*ibid.*) says he was taken to Rome and thrown to the beasts.

⁵ Petermann (in Schoene, *loc. cit.*) reads: and he in like manner received a retribution worthy of his deed.

⁶ Karst gives *unstatthaftes*; Petermann gives *absurditatis*.

In the case of Trajan, where we have one or two excellent authorities, we can see from a glance at the following extracts how distorted the story became by the time it reached the fifth century writers. It was the view of Sulpicius and Orosius, however, which was perpetuated throughout the middle ages.

Sulpicii Severi Chronicorum, liber II, 31.

(ed. Halm, Vienna, 1866, *C. S. E. L.*)

- 2 Non multo deinde intervallo tertia persecutio per Traianum fuit. qui cum tormentis et quaestionibus nihil in Christianis morte aut poena dignum reperisset, saeviri in eos ultra vetuit.

SULPICIUS SEVERUS, *Sacred History*, II, 31.

- 2 Then after a short interval there was a third persecution under Trajan. But when, by questioning and torture, he had found nothing in the Christians worthy of death or punishment, he forbade the raging against them to continue.

Pauli Orosii Historiarum adv. paganos, VII, 12.

(ed. Zangmeister, 1889, *Teubner*).

- 3 In persequendis sane Christianis errore deceptus tertius a Nerone, cum passim repertos cogi ad sacrificandum idolis ac detrectantes interfici praecepisset plurimique interficerentur, Plinii Secundi, qui inter ceteros iudices persecutor datus fuerat, relatu admonitus, eos homines praeter confessionem Christi honestaque conventicula nihil contrarium Romanis legibus facere, fiducia sane innocentis confessionis nemini mortem gravem ac formidulosam videri, rescriptis ilico lenioribus temperavit edictum.

OROSIUS, *History*, VII, 12, 3.

- 3 However, in persecuting the Christians he, beguiled by ignorance, was the third to follow Nero, since he had sent orders that wherever Christians should be found, they should be compelled to sacrifice and that, if they refused, they should be put to death, and since many were put to death. Admonished

by the report of Pliny the Younger, who among other judges had been assigned as persecutor, that these men did nothing contrary to the Roman laws save to confess Christ and to meet in respectable assemblies, but that due to the boldness of an innocent confession death seemed hard and terrible to none of them, he immediately tempered his edict with milder rescripts.

CHAPTER V

SOURCES FOR THE PERIOD OF HADRIAN

THE most important document for this period is the rescript of Hadrian to Minucius Fundanus. This was written about the year 125 A. D.¹ in response to a letter of inquiry sent by Granianus, the predecessor of Fundanus.

According to Eusebius this rescript was given in Latin in the *Apology* of Justin Martyr, who wrote from fifteen to twenty-five years later. Eusebius expressly states in the History that he translated it into Greek. Later, however, the Latin text of Justin was replaced by the Greek of Eusebius, so that the text handed down with the *Apology* is the same as that in Eusebius. However, in the Latin translation of the History by Rufinus, the translator has given a Latin text which does not exactly agree with the text as given in the Greek. The question has been raised, then, as to whether Rufinus translated the Greek of Eusebius into Latin, or whether he instead, as he had done in the case of Tertullian,² did not turn directly to the text of Justin and give the original rescript as he found it in the *Apology*.

The great majority of scholars accept the second alter-

¹ The date has been fixed by W. H. Waddington, *Fastes des provinces asiatiques* (Paris, 1872), p. 197 *et seq.*

² *Vide* Harnack, "Die griechische Uebersetzung des Apologeticus Tertullians" in *Texte u. Untersuchungen*, vol. xv (Leipzig, 1892), p. 11.

native,¹ and therefore cite or translate only the Latin text. If the Latin of Justin had not already been replaced by the Greek of Eusebius when Rufinus made the translation, it would not be unreasonable to suppose that he inserted the original Latin. But it is altogether impossible to say just when the Latin was replaced.² In order to prove the superiority of the Latin text, it has been argued that Rufinus omits the very phrases in which Eusebius informs his readers that he had translated the text into Greek. Furthermore, those who favor the Latin text say that the language savors rather of the jurist than of Rufinus,³ who employs very little legal language in his own writings.

This theory has in turn been opposed by a number of scholars.⁴ So far as the omissions of Rufinus are concerned it should be remembered that he was by no means a minute translator. He adds explanations where necessary and omits at will what he considers useless. In this case he has made an adaptation rather than a translation.⁵ On the use of legal terms, Callewaert ex-

¹ Aube, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 262; Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. i, p. 479; Hardy, *Christianity and the Rom. Govt.*, 2nd ed., p. 108, and many others. Otto, in his edition of Justin, has replaced the Greek text with the Latin of Rufinus.

² Lightfoot (*op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 479) remarks that as Rufinus lived in the West, there would be no occasion for substituting the Greek in the copies used in his neighborhood. But *vide* F. Funk, "Hadrians Rescript an Minucius Fundanus," in *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 1879, vol. 61, p. 126, revised in Funk, *Kirchengeschichtliche Abhandlungen u. Untersuchungen* (Paderborn, 1897), vol. i, p. 341.

³ Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. i, p. 479.

⁴ Keim, *Rom und das Christenthum*, p. 553 *et seq.*; Funk, *op. cit.* p. 332 *et seq.*; Doucet, *Essai sur les rapports d'église avec l'état romain* (Paris, 1883), p. 68 *et seq.*; C. Callewaert, "Le Rescrit d'Hadrien à Min. Fund.," in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, p. 181 *et seq.*

⁵ *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, *loc. cit.*, p. 183.

plains that a writer tries to adapt his style to the matter in hand, and that after all the terms are not so technical as to be beyond ordinary usage.¹

But Callewaert² goes further than simply to answer the arguments of those who favor the Latin text. He introduces a number of arguments to prove that the Latin of Rufinus is nothing more than a poor translation of Eusebius, and that, therefore, the best text is that of Eusebius. He very carefully analyzes the false edict of Antoninus Pius³ and calls attention to certain amplifications made by Rufinus in his translation, namely, the accentuating of the protective and benevolent tendencies of the rescript, and making vague expressions more precise. The translator, he says, is guilty of the same amplifications in connection with the rescript of Hadrian.⁴ He then calls attention to two or three words which seem to mark the Latin text as a translation. In the first place the Greek distinguishes two abuses: first, the use of petitions and outcries by the population in general, instead of a regular trial; secondly, false accusations. By introducing the word *innoxii*, Rufinus confuses the two and refers only to false accusations. In the next place the outcries and petitions might be well founded. If so they must be able to sustain them *not only* extrajudicially, *but even* before the tribunal. The Greek renders this idea perfectly; it is entirely lost in the translation. Finally, an error in the name of the proconsul had crept in. His real name was not Serennius but Licinius Granianus.⁵ We would expect Justin to give it correctly, but if he did then Rufinus did not use his text,

¹ *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, *loc. cit.*, p. 184.

² *Ibid.*, p. 184 *et seq.*

³ Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iv, 13, 6.

⁴ Callewaert, in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, p. 186 *et seq.*

⁵ Waddington, *Fastes des prov. asiatiques*, p. 197.

for Rufinus follows the erroneous title given by Eusebius.¹

It would seem, then, that our best text of the rescript is the Greek of Eusebius. It is of course not altogether impossible that the Latin text of Rufinus is the original text of Justin, but the weight of argument is most certainly in favor of the theory that Rufinus translated the Greek text of Eusebius and did not revert to the original of Justin.

The genuineness of the rescript to Minucius Fundanus has been much disputed. Keim² was the first to raise the question, but he in turn has been followed by a number of others.³ But the arguments raised by Keim and his followers are based upon a misconception of the situation as well as upon a misunderstanding of the rescript, and incidentally of the rescript of Trajan as well. Keim, for example, who would cut off the last chapter of the so-called *First Apology* as a forgery, regards the rescript as a forged edict of toleration,⁴ but he is forced to the conclusion that it existed before the time of Melito who wrote only twenty or possibly thirty years later than Justin.

Following are some of the arguments introduced to disprove the genuineness of the document. In the first place its parallelism to the rescript of Trajan suggests a forgery.⁵

¹ Callewaert, *loc. cit.*, p. 188.

² Keim, "Bedenken gegen die Echtheit des Hadrianischen Reskript," in *Theol. Jahr.*, 1856, p. 387 *et seq.* Also in *Rom und das Christ.*, p. 553 *et seq.*

³ Aubé, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 263 *et seq.*; Overbeck, *Studien zur Gesch. der alt. Kirche*, vol. i, p. 134 *et seq.*, p. 93 *et seq.*; Hausrath, *Neut. Zeit.*, vol. iii, p. 532 *et seq.*, and others.

⁴ Keim, *Rom und das Christ.*, p. 554 *et seq.*; but see Callewaert, in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, *loc. cit.*, p. 180; Ramsay, *Ch. in the Rom. Emp.*, p. 321.

⁵ Aubé, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

Moreover, the inscription is unusual,¹ and it is astonishing that Hadrian should address the legate as Serennius when his name was Licinius.² It is not less surprising that the same terms are used which appear later in the apologists, for example, the phrase,—*ne et innoxii perturbentur et calumniatoribus latrocinandi tribuatur occasio*.³ Furthermore, the language is vague, wavering, and in no way corresponds to the firmer style of the numerous rescripts of Hadrian collected in the pandects.⁴ But of still greater importance, according to those who reject the rescript, is the striking silence of Tertullian, especially since he is very careful to give a summary of the letter of Trajan,⁵ and since in a later chapter,⁶ where he also refers to the rescript of Trajan, he mentions Hadrian, but says not a word about the letter, which incidentally would have furnished him an excellent argument for his thesis.⁷

But as Allard says in one of his most recent works,⁸ the scholarship of to-day is almost unanimous in recognizing the authenticity of the rescript.⁹ The short notice of

¹ Aubé, *op. cit.*, p. 267. For an answer *Vide* Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, pp. 249-254.

² Answered by Callewaert, in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903, *loc. cit.*, p. 180.

³ Aubé, *op. cit.*, p. 268. This objection applies only to the Latin text of Rufinus.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁵ Tertullian, *Apology*, ii.

⁶ *Ibid.*, v.

⁷ Aubé, *op. cit.*, p. 271 *et seq.*

⁸ Allard, *Le Christianisme et l'empire romain*, 7th ed. (Paris, 1908), p. 41.

⁹ Wieseler, *Die Christenverfolgungen*, p. 18; Funk, *op. cit.*, p. 330 *et seq.*; Doucet, *op. cit.*, p. 68 *et seq.*; Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. i, p. 447; Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 321; Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., p. 110; Callewaert, in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.*, 1903 *loc. cit.*, p. 178;

Melito,¹ who wrote less than a half-century after the descript was written, is quite sufficient to prove its genuineness. The silence of Tertullian, who it must be remembered wrote thirty years after Melito, loses its force in view of this notice of the Bishop of Sardis. The rescript was in reality much less important and less known than that of Trajan; in fact was probably practically unknown outside of the province of Asia.

It is not only possible to answer all of the arguments raised against the authenticity of the rescript, but its genuineness is established beyond doubt by a number of positive facts. In the first place, a forger would hardly have added a Latin document to a Greek apology, and Eusebius says expressly that it was in Latin.² Nor would a forger have addressed the letter to the successor of Granianus.³

As Callewaert⁴ says, it fits so harmoniously into its historical setting, it reflects so faithfully the character and tendencies of the pagans in Asia Minor, it so harmonizes with the rules of Roman penal law and procedure, and with the rescript of Trajan, that it could not possibly be a forgery. It is favorable to the Christians, hence is not the work of a pagan.⁵ If it had been the work of a Christian it would have been worded so as to save the Christians, instead of simply aiming at the preservation of order.⁶

Mommsen, in *Hist. Zeit.*, 1890, vol. 64, *loc. cit.*, p. 420, and many others recognize its genuineness. *Vide* Harnack, "Das Edict des Antoninus Pius," in *Texte u. Untersuchungen*, vol. xiii, pt. 4 (Leipzig, 1895), p. 44 *et seq.*

¹ In Eusebius, *Ch. Hist.*, iv, 26, 10.

² Callewaert, "Le Rescrit d'Hadrien," in *Rev. d'hist. et de lit. rel.* 1903, p. 178.

³ Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, p. 249 *et seq.*

⁴ Callewaert, *loc. cit.*, p. 174 *et seq.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

Eusebii Ecclesticae Historiae, liber IV, 8, 9.

(ed. Eduard Schwartz, Leipzig, 1903, G. C. S.)

Rufini Translatio (ed. Th. Mommsen).

- 6 Ἐτι δ' ὁ αὐτὸς ἱστορεῖ δεξάμενον τὸν Ἀδριανὸν παρὰ Σερεννίου Γρανιανοῦ, λαμπροτάτου ἡγουμένον, γράμματα ὑπὲρ Χριστιανῶν περιέχοντα ὡς οὐ δίκαιον εἶη ἐπὶ μηδενὶ ἐγκλήματι βοαῖς δήμου χαρίζο- μένους ἀκρίτως κτείνειν αὐτοὺς, ἀντι- γράψαι Μινουκίῳ Φουνδανῷ, ἀνθυπάτῳ τῆς Ἀσίας, προστάττοντα μηδένα χρίνειν ἀνευ ἐγκλήματος καὶ εὐλόγου κατηγορίας·
- 7 καὶ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς δὲ ἀντίγραφον παρατέ- θηται, τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν φωνήν, ὡς εἶχεν. διαφυλάξας, προλέγει δ' αὐτῆς ταῦτα

καὶ ἐξ ἐπιστολῆς δὲ τοῦ μεγίστου καὶ ἐπιφανεστάτου Καίσαρος Ἀδριανοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν ἔχοντες ἀπαιτεῖν ὑμᾶς, καθὰ ἠξιώσαμεν, κελεῦσαι τὰς κρίσεις γίνεσθαι, τοῦτο οὐχ ὡς ὑπὸ Ἀδριανοῦ κελευσθὲν μᾶλλον ἠξιώσαμεν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ ἐπίστασ- θαι δικαίαν ἀξιούν τὴν προσφώνησιν. ὑπετάξαμεν δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς Ἀδ- ριανοῦ τὸ ἀντίγραφον, ἵνα καὶ τοῦτο ἀληθεύειν ἡμᾶς γνωρίζητε, καὶ ἔστιν τόδε.

- 8 τοίοιτοι ὁ μὲν δηλωθεὶς ἀνὴρ αὐτὴν παρατίθεται τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν ἀντιγραφὴν, ἡμεῖς δ' ἐπὶ τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν κατὰ δύναμιν αὐτὴν μετελήφαμεν, ἔχουσαν ὥδε·

Sed et idem ipse vir scribit Hadrianum principem, susceptis a Serennio Graniano clarissimo viro praeside literis, in quibus de Christianis percontabatur, rescripsisse quod non esset iustum Christianos nullius criminis reos absque iudicio legibusque puniri.

simul et exemplum epistolae ipsius subicit continentis hunc modum :

Exemplum epistolae imperatoris Hadriani ad Minucium Fundanum proconsulem Asiae.

- 9, 1 Μινουκίῳ Φινδανῳ, ἐπιστολὴν ἐδεξάμην
 γραφεῖσάν μοι ἀπὸ Σερεννίου Γρανιανοῦ,
 λαμπροτάτου ἀνδρός, ὄντινα σὺ διεδέξω.
 οὐ δοκεῖ μοι οὖν τὸ πρῶγμα ἀζήτητον
 καταλιπεῖν, ἵνα μήτε οἱ ἄνθρωποι τα-
 ράττωνται καὶ τοῖς συκοφάνταις χορηγία
 2 κακουργίας παρασχεθῇ. εἰ οὖν σαφῶς εἰς
 ταύτην τὴν ἀξίωσιν οἱ ἐπαρχιώται δύναν-
 ται διυσχυρίζεσθαι κατὰ τῶν Χριστια-
 νῶν, ὥς καὶ πρὸ βήματος ἀποκρίνεσθαι,
 ἐπὶ τοῦτο μόνον τραπῶσιν, ἀλλ' οὐκ
 ἀξιώσεσιν οὐδὲ μόναις βοαῖς. πολλῷ γὰρ
 μᾶλλον προσήκεν, εἰ τις κατηγορεῖν βού-
 3 λοιτο, τοῦτό σε διαγινώσκειν. εἰ τις οὖν
 κατηγορεῖ καὶ δείκνυσίν τι παρὰ τοὺς
 νόμους πράττοντας, οὕτως ὀριζε κατὰ τὴν
 δύναμιν τοῦ ἁμαρτήματος· ὥς μὰ τὸν
 Ἡρακλέα εἰ τις συκοφαντίας χάριν τοῦτο
 προτείνει, διαλάμβανε ὑπὲρ τῆς δεινότητος
 καὶ φρόντιζε ὅπως ἂν ἐκδικήσεται.

Accepi litteras ad me scrip-
 tas a decessore tuo Serennio
 Graniano clarissimo viro et
 non placet mihi relationem
 silentio praeterire, ne et in-
 noxii perturbentur et calum-
 niatoribus latrocinandi tribu-
 atur occasio. itaque si evi-
 denter provinciales huic peti-
 tioni suae adesse valent ad-
 versum Christianos, ut pro
 tribunali eos in aliquo ar-
 guant, hoc eis exequi non
 prohibeo. precibus autem in
 hoc solis et adclamationibus
 uti eis non permitto. etenim
 multo aequius est, si quis
 volet accusare, te cognoscere
 de obiectis. si quis igitur
 accusat et probat adversum
 leges quicquam agere memo-
 ratos homines, pro merito
 peccatorum etiam supplicia
 statues. illud mehercule mag-
 nopere curabis, ut si quis
 calumniae gratia quemquam
 horum postulaverit reum, in
 hunc pro sui nequitia sup-
 pliciis severioribus vindices.

EUSEBIUS, *Church History*, IV, 8, 9.

- 4 The same writer (Justin), speaking of the Jewish war
 which took place at that time, adds the following: "For in
 the late Jewish war Barcocheba, the leader of the Jewish re-
 bellion, commanded that Christians alone should be visited
 with terrible punishments unless they would deny and blas-
 pheme Jesus Christ." . . . The same writer, moreover, relates
 6 that Hadrian, having received from Serennius Granianus, a
 most distinguished governor, a letter in behalf of the Chris-
 tians, in which he stated that it was not just to slay the Chris-
 tians without a regular indictment and without trial, merely

for the sake of gratifying the outcries of the populace, sent a rescript to Minucius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia, commanding him to condemn no one without an indictment and a reasonable charge. And he gives a copy of the epistle, preserving the original Latin in which it was written, and prefacing it with the following words: "Although from the epistle of the greatest and most illustrious Emperor Hadrian, your father, we have good ground to demand that you order judgment to be given as we have desired, yet we have asked this not because it was ordered by Hadrian, but rather because we know that what we ask is just. And we have subjoined the copy of Hadrian's epistle that you may know that we are speaking the truth in this matter also. And this is the copy." After these words the author referred to gives the rescript in Latin, which we have translated into Greek as accurately as we could. It reads as follows:

9, 1 "To Minucius Fundanus. I have received an epistle, written to me by Serennius Granianus, a most illustrious man, whom you have succeeded. It does not seem right to me that the matter should be passed by without examination, lest the people be harassed and opportunity be given to the informers for practicing villainy. If, therefore, the inhabitants of the province can clearly sustain this petition against the Christians so as to give answer even in a court of law, let them pursue this course alone, but let them not have resort to men's petitions and outcries. For it is far more proper, if anyone wishes to make an accusation, that you should examine into it. If anyone therefore accuses them and shows that they are doing anything contrary to the laws, do you pass judgment according to the nature of the crime. But, by Hercules! if any one bring an accusation through mere calumny, decide in regard to his criminality, and see to it that you inflict punishment."

Such are the contents of Hadrian's rescript.¹

¹ Except for a few changes this is the translation of A. C. McGiffert in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. i.

RUFINUS, *Translation of Eusebius*, IV, 8, 9.

- 6 But the same man also writes that the Emperor Hadrian, having received letters from the governor Serennius Granianus, a most distinguished man, in which he earnestly inquired about the Christians, sent a rescript saying it was not just for Christians accused of no crime to be punished
7 without a trial and illegally. And at the same time he appends a copy of his letter which reads as follows:

Transcript of the letter of the Emperor Hadrian to Minucius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia.

- 9, 1 I have received letters written to me by your predecessor in office Serennius Granianus, a most distinguished man, and it does not seem right to me that the report should be passed by in silence, lest innocent men be harrassed and opportunity be
2 given to calumniators for practicing robbery. If, therefore, the provincials can clearly sustain this petition of theirs against the Christians, so as to accuse them on some point before the tribunal, I do not prevent them from following this course. But I do not permit them to make use of entreaties and outcries alone for this purpose. For it is much more equitable, if any one wishes to make an accusation, that you should make an investigation into the charges. If anyone therefore accuses the before mentioned men and proves that they are doing anything contrary to the laws, do you by all means pass judgment according to the deserts of the crimes.
3 But, by Hercules, you will particularly look out for this, that if someone accuses anyone of these for the sake of calumny, you will inflict upon him more severe punishments according to his wickedness.

Justin Martyr, a native of Palestine, was a pagan philosopher who was converted to Christianity in mature life. He was probably martyred at Rome somewhere around the year 165 A. D.¹ Eusebius mentions two apologies of

¹ Blunt, *Apology of Justin Martyr* (Cambridge, 1911), Introduction, p. x; vide R. Knopf, "Acten des Justin und seiner Genossen," in *Ausgewählte Märtyreracten* (Tübingen and Leipzig, 1901, S. Q.), p. 17.

Justin, one written in the reign of Antoninus Pius and one in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. It seems likely, however, that the two which have come down to us really are but the first apology¹ and that the second has been lost. The question of the date depends upon whether the two apologies as we have them are in reality distinct. On the ground that they were distinct many have dated the first about 138 or 139 A. D.² But it seems most likely that the two apologies were really one and that they belong to about 150 A. D.³ At any rate the conversion of Justin took place during the last years of Hadrian's reign or possibly at the beginning of the reign of his successor, so that what he says about the Christians in this passage properly applies to the reign of Hadrian.

JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apology*,⁴ II, 12.

For I myself, while I was delighting in the teachings of Plato, when I heard the Christians slandered and saw them fearless of death and of all the other things ordinarily considered fearful, understood that it was impossible that they could be living in wickedness and pleasure. For what man who is fond of pleasure or is intemperate and who counts it good to feed on human flesh could welcome death that he might be deprived of his pleasures, and would not rather strive

¹ Vide Eusebius (*Ch. Hist.*, iv, 8, 16, 17) who quotes from the two as though they were identical.

² G. Krüger, *History of Early Christian Literature* (New York, 1897), p. 108; Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 320. Blunt (*op. cit.*, p. xlv) discusses the whole question and gives all the authorities.

³ Blunt, *op. cit.*, p. li *et seq.* Harnack (*Chronologie*, vol. i, p. 278) holds that the second constituted an appendix to the first which was all written about the middle of the century. So also O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte des altchristliche Litteratur* (Freiburg, 1902), vol. i. p. 202 *et seq.*

⁴ *Justini Apologia* (ed. Th. Otto, Jena, 1876. *Corpus Apol. Christ.*).

to continue indefinitely the present life and escape the notice of the rulers, instead of giving himself up to be put to death? And this also the wicked demons have now caused to be done by certain wicked men. For having put some to death upon the false evidence brought against us, they also dragged to the torture our families, either children or weak women, and by fearful torture compelled them to confess to those fabulous actions, which they themselves perpetrate openly.¹ . . . But because we persuade men to avoid such misfortunes and those who practice and imitate such deeds, as even now by these words we have striven eagerly to persuade you, we are assailed in many and various ways.

The following extract from the *Apology* of Melito, which was written only same thirty years after the death of Hadrian, has a very important bearing upon the genuineness of the rescript to Minucius Fundanus.

EUSEBIUS, *Church History*, IV, 26, 10.

Quoted from the *Apology* of Melito.

"But thy pious fathers corrected their ignorance,² having frequently rebuked in writing many who dared to attempt new measures against them. Among them thy grandfather Hadrian appears to have written to many others, and also to Fundanus, the proconsul and governor of Asia. . ."³

The *Chronicle* of Eusebius gives no information not already found in the *History*. The translation of Jerome, however, does not entirely agree with that of the *History*.⁴

¹ Φονεῖοντες γὰρ αὐτοὶ τινὰς ἐπὶ συκοφαντίᾳ τῇ εἰς ἡμᾶς καὶ εἰς βασάνους εἰλκυσαν οἰκέτας τῶν ἡμετέρων ἢ παῖδας ἢ γυναῖκα, καὶ δι' αἰκισμῶν φοβερῶν ἐξαναγκάζουσι κατεπειν ταῦτα τὰ μυθολογούμενα, ἃ αὐτοὶ φανερῶς πράττουσιν.

² See the preceding section in pt. ii, ch. ii, p. 150.

³ McGiffert in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. i.

⁴ For discussion *vide* pt. i, ch. v.

As a check upon the accuracy of Jerome a translation of the Armenian text is given, together with a translation of Georgius Syncellus who wrote at the beginning of the ninth century. This quotation was in all probability taken directly from the original *Chronicle* of Eusebius.¹

JEROME'S TRANSLATION OF EUSEBIUS, *Chronicle*, Olympiad,
226.

Quadratus, a disciple of the apostles, and Aristides, our Athenian philosopher, submitted to Hadrian books written in behalf of the Christian religion. The governor, Serenus Granus (Serennius Granianus), a man of most exceptional renown, sent letters to the emperor, saying that it was unjust to sacrifice the blood of innocent men to the clamors of the mob; and to make criminals of those who had committed no crime, simply for the name alone and for their belief.² Aroused by these things Hadrian wrote to Minutius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia, that the Christians should not be condemned except for crimes, a copy of which letter remained in existence up to our own time.

EUSEBIUS, *Chronicon*, ad. Olymp., 226.

(Translation from the Armenian.³)

He received also from Serennius, an illustrious governor, a letter concerning the Christians, that it indeed was unjust to put them to death upon report alone without an examination and without any accusation. He wrote to Monicus Fundius (Minucius Fundanus), proconsul of Asia, that they should not be condemned without an offense and an accusation. And a copy of this edict is still in circulation.

¹ See Schoene's edition of the *Chronicon*, ad. Olymp., 226.

² (Ed. Schoene, Berlin, 1866), iniquum esse dicens clamoribus vulgi innocentium hominum sanguinem concedi et sine ullo crimine, nominis tantum et sectae reos fieri.

³ *Vide* pt. i, ch. v, p. 105, note 1. J. Karst, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

GEORGIUS SYNCELLUS, *Chronographia*,¹ An. Mun., 5609.

The Emperor Hadrian, having received these and also a letter from Serenius, a most distinguished governor, that it was unjust to put the Christians to death without trial and without any indictment,² wrote to Minucius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia, to put no one to death except upon charges and upon an indictment.

Irenaeus was born somewhere near the year 130 A. D. The note on the martyrdom of Telesphorus is taken from his treatise *Against Heresies*, which was written between 182 and 188 A. D.

IRENÆUS, *Against Heresies*,³ III, iii, 3.

Then was appointed the sixth after the apostles, Sextus, and following him Telesphorus who also was gloriously martyred.⁴

Lampridius, who wrote at the beginning of the fourth century, is the most important of *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, but by no means entirely reliable. As he himself says, the passage concerning Hadrian is merely hearsay, and has very little likelihood of being the truth; in fact seems almost incredible.

LAMPRIIDIUS, *Life of Alexander Severus*,⁵ 43, 6, 7.

He wished to raise a temple to Christ and to receive him among the gods, a desire attributed also to Hadrian, who ordered temples without images to be built in all cities. They

¹ *Georgii Syncelli Chronographia* (ed. Dindorf, Bonn, 1829, *Corpus Scriptores Historiae Byzantinae*).

² ὡς ἀδίκον εἶη κτείνειν Χριστιανοὺς ἀκρίτως ἐπὶ μὴδενὶ τῶν ἐγκλημάτων.

³ *S. Irenaei Libri quinque adversus Haereses* (ed. W. W. Harvey, Cambridge, 1857).

⁴ ὃς καὶ ἐνδόξως ἐμαρτύρησεν.

⁵ *Aelii Lampridii Vita Alexandri Severi* (ed. H. Peter, 1884, *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Teubner).

are now, therefore, since they are without divinities, called temples of Hadrian, because he was said to have designed them for this purpose.¹ But Alexander was restrained by those who examined the entrails of the victims and found that if he should do this all would become Christians, and the other temples would be deserted.

Vopiscus, the last of the same group of writers, belongs to the first third of the fourth century.² He meant well, and was conscientious, but was entirely lacking in historical criticism. The letter of Hadrian which he quotes is manifestly a forgery.³

FLAVIUS VOPISCUS, *Life of Saturninus*,⁴ 7, 8.

And lest any of the Egyptians should be angry at me, and think I have expressed my personal opinion, I will quote a letter taken from the writings of his freedman Phlegon, which exposes to the core the life of the Egyptians.

"Hadrian Augustus to Servianus the Consul, greeting.

I have come to know Egypt, which you were praising to me, my dearest Servianus, as a country totally capricious, irresolute, and aspiring to every innovation. There those who worship Serapis are actually Christians, and those who say they are bishops of Christ worship Serapis; there is not a chief of the Jewish synagogue, nor a Samaritan, nor a Christian priest, who is not an astrologer, a soothsayer and an anointer. When the patriarch himself comes to Egypt he is compelled to

¹ Quae ille ad hoc parasse dicebatur.

² Teuffel and Schwabe, *Hist. of Rom. Lit.*, § 402.

³ Schultze, "Hadriani epistola ad Servianum," in *Theologische Literaturblatt*, vol. 18, 1897, p. 561; Preuschen u. Krüger, *Hand. der Kirch.*, p. 65. Keim (*Rom und das Christenthum*, p. 550) accepts it as genuine and assigns as the date 134 A. D. Lightfoot also accepts it, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. i, p. 481.

⁴ *Flavii Vopisci Vita Saturnini* (ed. H. Peter, 1884, *Scrip. Hist. Aug.*, Teubner).

worship Christ by some and Serapis by others. . . .¹ They have a single god, money. The Christians, the Jews and all the people alike worship him.² Oh that the morals of the city were better, for, in view of its fruitfulness and its magnitude, it is indeed worthy to be the leader of all Egypt! . . .

The excerpts from Sulpicius Severus, Jerome, and Orosius all belong to the early fifth century. They are interesting in that they show the traditions current in the fifth century.

SULPICIOUS SEVERUS, *Sacred History*,³ II, 31, 3.

Because of this disturbance (the Jewish revolt) Hadrian, thinking that he would destroy the Christian faith by an injury to the holy places, placed images of the gods both in the temple and at the place of our Lord's suffering. And since he thought that the Christians were drawn principally from the Jews—for at that time the church at Jerusalem did not have a priest except of the circumcision—he ordered a cohort of soldiers to be placed as a constant sentinel, in order to prevent all Jews from approaching Jerusalem. But this indeed was an advantage to the Christians, for at that time nearly all worshipped Christ as God without disregarding the law. . . . The fourth persecution took place under Hadrian, the continuation of which, however, he afterwards forbade, saying that it was unjust for anyone to be judged a criminal without having committed any crime.⁴

¹ Illic qui Serapem colunt, Christiani sunt et devoti sunt Serapi, qui se Christi episcopus dicunt, nemo illic archisynagogus Iudaeorum, nemo Samarites, nemo Christianorum presbyter non mathematicus, non haruspex, non aliptes. ipse ille patriarcha cum Aegyptum venerit, ab aliis Serapidem adorare, ab aliis cogitur Christum.

² Unus illis deus nummus est. hunc Christiani, hunc Iudaei, hunc omnes venerantur et gentes.

³ *Sulpicii Severi Chronicorum libri* (ed. Halm, Vienna, 1866, C. S. E. L.).

⁴ Quarta sub Adriano persecutio numeratur, quam tamen postea exerceri prohibuit, iniustum esse pronuntians, ut quisquam sine crimine reus constitueretur.

JEROME, *Letters*,¹ LXX, 4.

Did not Quadratus, a disciple of the Apostles and pontiff of the Athenian church, submit to the emperor Hadrian, when he was visiting the Eleusinian mysteries, a treatise in behalf of our religion? And everyone felt so much admiration that due to his remarkable ability a most severe persecution was checked.² Aristides the philosopher, a most eloquent man, presented to the same prince an apology in behalf of the Christians, which was composed of the sayings of the philosophers.

OROSIUS, *History*,³ VII, 13.

In the year 867 A. U. C., Hadrian, the child of a cousin of Trajan, and the twelfth emperor after Augustus, assumed control and thereafter ruled for twenty-one years. Having been enlightened by Quadratus, a disciple of the apostles, and by Aristides the Athenian, a man full of faith and wisdom, who composed treatises concerning the Christian religion, and having been informed by the legate Serenus Granius (Serenius Granianus), he commanded in a letter sent to Minucius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia, that no one should be permitted to condemn the Christians without the evidence or the proof of crime; . . .⁴ And he avenged the Christians, whom they (the Jews), under the leadership of Cocheba, were tormenting because they did not join with him against the Romans.

¹ Ed. Vallarsi in Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, vol. 22, 1857.

² Persecutionem gravissimam . . . sedaret ingenium.

³ *Orosii Historiarum Libri* (ed. Zangemeister, 1889, Teubner).

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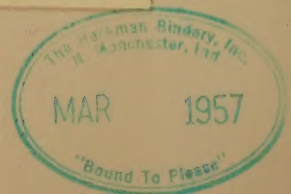


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